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CHRISTMAS 2022

BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE

I'm sure it hasn't escaped your attention that this year is the BBC's centenary. The corporation has celebrated this milestone with a raft of programmes and web content, and here in the magazine David Hendy has spent 2022 exploring different aspects of **the BBC's rich history**. He's now come to the conclusion of the series and, on page 68, he considers how the BBC has embraced the digital age and rounds off by selecting six programmes that sum up its history – do let us know whether you agree with his suggestions.

For our cover feature this month, we're heading to the mid-16th-century, when tensions were erupting in the West Country. **The "Prayer Book Rebellion"**, as the revolt is often called, has sometimes been dismissed as a relatively minor affair, but as Mark Stoyle's new research has revealed, it was an extremely significant moment for the Tudor state. Turn to page 20 for his piece.

The Victorian era is another period that receives a great deal of attention, but one aspect that remains relatively unknown is **the lives of black Britons in the 19th century**. In their piece on page 26, Keshia N Abraham and John Woolf seek to redress that balance, championing several characters who helped shape this pivotal age.

As this is our Christmas issue, this month's magazine also contains our annual **books of the year** feature as well as our **Christmas quiz and crossword**, which I trust will keep you entertained over the festive period.
I hope you have a very happy Christmas.

Rob Attar
Editor

THREE THINGS I'VE LEARNED THIS MONTH

1. Birds of leather
Among the festive trivia in our *Q&A* pages is the remarkable fact that in the pre-railway age, turkeys regularly made the journey from Norfolk to London by foot (sometimes wearing shoes) in the weeks before Christmas (page 47).

2. Great suggestions
Our columnist Michael Wood has had a remarkable career in popular history, but I hadn't realised until reading this month's piece that he was consulted about the 2004 film *Alexander*. Turn to page 16 to see if they took his advice.

3. Cold remedy
It may not be ice-cream weather right now, but I was still fascinated to discover that the ice-cream cone was introduced to combat a disease. You'll have to take our Christmas quiz (page 92) to discover which one…

THIS ISSUE'S CONTRIBUTORS

Ryan Gingeras
"An understanding of late Ottoman history gives us a critical window into the development of modern states and society throughout the wider Middle East and eastern Europe."
Ryan considers the factors that caused the Ottoman empire to crumble in 1922 on page 36

Sumita Mukherjee
"The intersections of race and class, and the legacies of post-colonial migration, cannot be underestimated in understanding Rishi Sunak's rise to power"
Sumita shines a light on the forces and figures that paved the way for Rishi Sunak to become prime minister on page 9

Mark Stoyle
"My new book argues that the so-called 'Prayer Book Rebellion' of 1549 posed a more serious threat to the regime of King Edward VI than has previously been recognised."
Mark reveals how the bloody West Country uprising could have overturned the Tudors on page 20

Jane Draycott
"I came across a brief mention of Cleopatra Selene in an ancient source and became determined to find out what happened to her: how could the daughter of the famous Antony and Cleopatra be so little known today?"
Jane introduces the forgotten African queen on page 50

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ON THE COVER: THE WESTERN REBELLION OF 1549; ALAMY. BACKGROUND: DREAMSTIME. MEDIEVAL VIOLENCE ILLUSTRATIONS: LAURIE AVON. IDA B WELLS, SAMUEL COLERIDGE-TAYLOR AND WALTER TULL: GETTY IMAGES. THIS PAGE: ALAMY/DREAMSTIME

CONTENTS

CHRISTMAS 2022

FEATURES

20 Tudor uprising
Mark Stoyle follows the violent progress of the Prayer Book Rebellion, the 16th-century uprising that engulfed Devon and Cornwall

26 Black Victorians
Keshia N Abraham and **John Woolf** introduce a diverse cast of journalists, scientists, actors and musicians whose stories deserve to be better known

32 Medieval deception
During the Middle Ages, triumph in battle wasn't just a matter of military might – sneak tactics often paid dividends, says **James Titterton**

36 Fall of the Ottoman empire
A century after the demise of the once-mighty superpower, **Ryan Gingeras** explains how outbreaks of sectarian violence fuelled its downfall

50 Cleopatra's daughter
Jane Draycott traces the fall and rise of Cleopatra Selene, offspring of Egypt's most famous queen

57 Cuban missile crisis
How close did the world really come to nuclear war in 1962? **Max Hastings** returns to that febrile moment and draws lessons for today

62 Signs of the times
Rosamund Oates explores the lives of deaf people in the early modern period

68 Dawn of the digital era
In the final part of our series on the BBC's history, **David Hendy** discusses how the broadcaster embraced the digital revolution

EVERY MONTH

6 **Anniversaries**

The Conversation

9 **The Conversation** The rise of Rishi Sunak, unrest in Iran, and accuracy in period dramas
15 **Hidden Histories:** Kavita Puri on the Ugandan south Asians who started new lives in 1970s Britain
16 **Michael Wood** on Alexander the Great's complex legacy

18 **Letters**
46 **Q&A** Your history questions answered

Books

72 **Books of the Year:** Rana Mitter, Catherine Nixey and Michael Wood discuss 2022's top releases

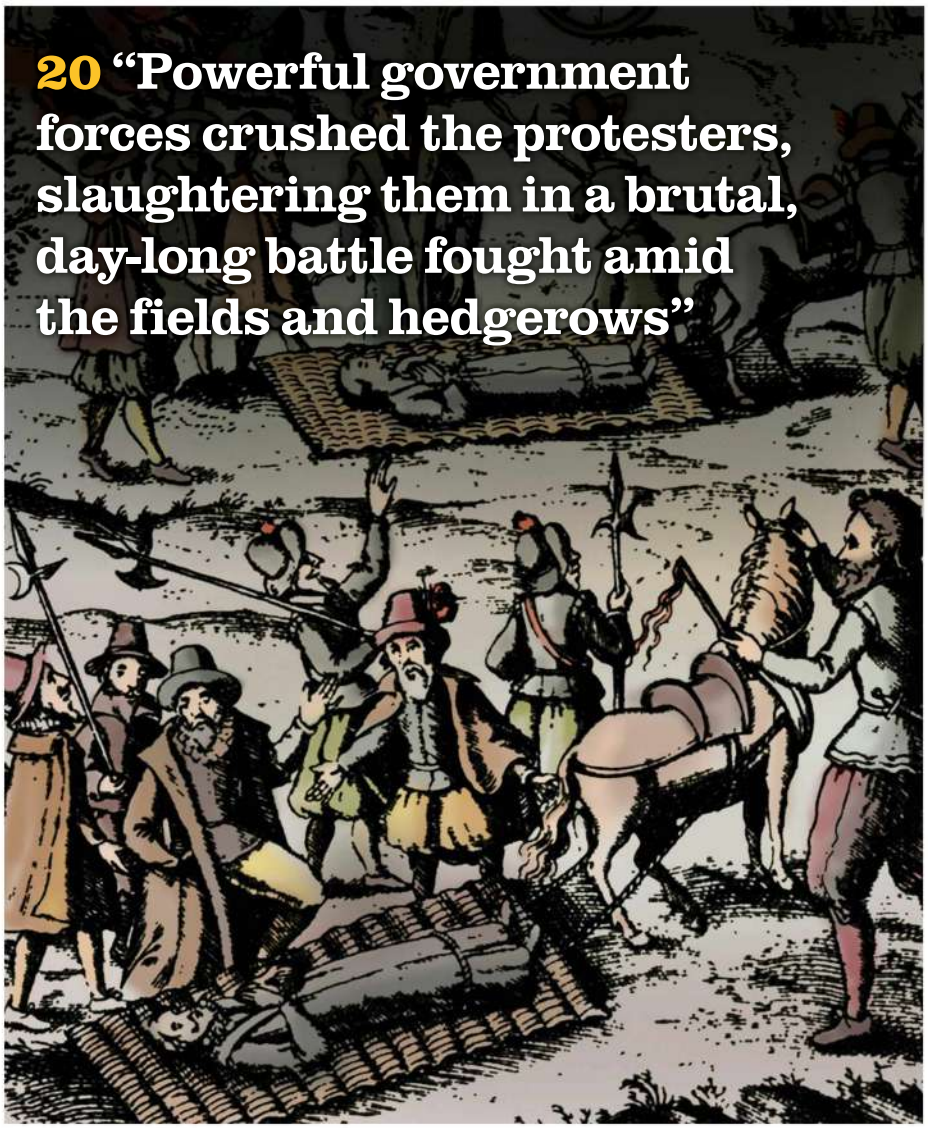
Encounters

81 **Diary:** What to see and do this month
86 **Podcast:** Victorian visions of a renewable future
88 **Explore:** London Mithraeum
90 **Holidays:** Strasbourg, France

92 **Festive quiz**
94 **Prize crossword**
98 **My history hero:** BBC journalist Jeremy Bowen chooses foreign correspondent Vincent Sheean

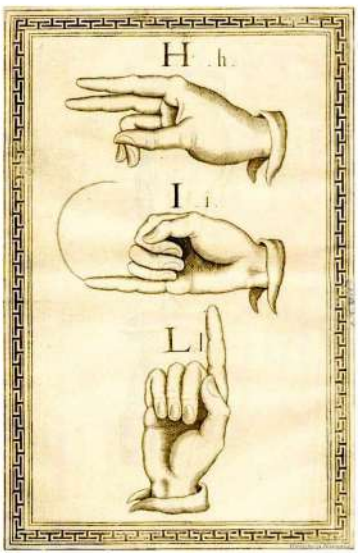
FRAN MONKS/GETTY IMAGES/BRIDGEMAN

32



20 **"Powerful government forces crushed the protesters, slaughtering them in a brutal, day-long battle fought amid the fields and hedgerows"**

62



26

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ANNIVERSARIES

HELEN CARR highlights events that took place at Christmas in history

25 DECEMBER 1492

Columbus's flagship runs aground

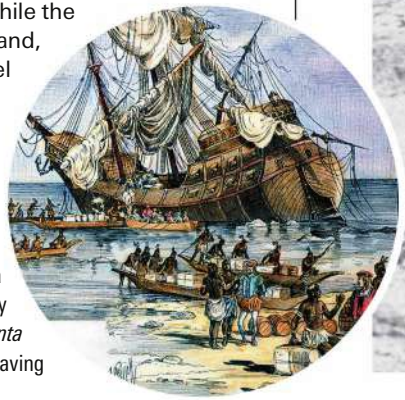
An unexpected storm causes chaos for the exhausted crew

Christopher Columbus was wretched with exhaustion when, at about 11pm on 25 December 1492, he finally lay down to sleep. This journey had been his first across the Atlantic – he had set sail on the *Santa Maria* from Spain almost five months earlier, trying to chart a new western route to Asia. While he never reached Asia, he did discover an island in the Bahamas, which he dubbed San Salvador. But it was on the journey home that Columbus and his flagship ran into trouble.

That night, the sky was "dead calm… the sea like a small bowl". As the water was so still, the sailor at the helm of the ship took a rest, and handed the rudder to a ship's boy. He had not anticipated that calm could so quickly become chaos. As they slept under a blanket of stars, the current picked up – and took the *Santa Maria* with it.

Jolted awake, Columbus ran from his bed to the ship boy's cries. The *Santa Maria* had run aground on a reef and lay "broadside onto the sea". Columbus had no choice but to order the "mast to be cut and the ship lightened" of its possessions.

They had landed on the shores of a Caribbean island that Columbus called La Isla Española, or Hispaniola (in the part that's now the Republic of Haiti), where they built a fort with planks torn off the *Santa Maria*. But while the crew found safety on land, their once sturdy vessel was abandoned and left to sink into a watery grave.



The people of Hispaniola help Columbus's crew carry supplies off the wrecked *Santa Maria* in this 1892 engraving

Idris of Libya arrives in Tripoli in May 1951. On 24 December that year, as Libya gained its independence, he would be made king

GETTY IMAGES/TOPFOTO

Vincent Van Gogh's 1889 self portrait, painted while recovering after cutting off part of his own ear

23 DECEMBER 1888

Vincent Van Gogh slices off part of his left ear, wraps it in paper, and delivers it to a farmer's daughter named Gabrielle Berlatier, who was scarred from a rabid dog attack.

24 DECEMBER 1951

Libya gains independence

The north African nation celebrates its autonomy

On 24 December 1951, Idris I delivered his first address to the nation as its monarch. From his base in the major seaport of Benghazi, surrounded by throngs of politicians, the first king of Libya spoke to his people over a crackled radio broadcast: "We proclaim to the people of Libya that in fulfilment of their endeavours and of the UN resolution of 21 November 1949, our beloved country has, with the help of God, attained independence."

It had been nearly 25 months since the United Nations had voted for Libya to become a united and independent kingdom no later than 1 January 1952. With one week to go before the deadline, the news was greeted with joy as people waved the Libyan flag. The former Italian colony, which had been under the administration of France and Britain since 1943, had reached a significant moment for its national identity and autonomy. "We offer to Almighty God our prayers of heartfelt praise and thanksgiving for his blessings and rejoice with the Libyan people upon this happy and historic occasion," said Idris I. Western support was also received. That day, the US president, Harry Truman, sent a personal message of congratulations to Idris I.

The new United Kingdom of Libya was built on a constitution, an agreement made in October 1951, shortly before independence was granted. Libya was to be a federal monarchy led by King Idris I, meaning a substantial amount of power and influence was funnelled and exercised through one chief of state.

With the succession set to pass through Idris's male heirs, the ground seemed steady for Libya's hopeful future. However, when Idris I had no male heir to succeed him, trouble arose. Rumblings of rebellion became reality and on 1 September 1969, the officer Muammar Gaddafi was aided by a contingent of the military when he seized power in a bloodless coup. Under Gaddafi, Libya was plunged into a period of draconian dictatorship for the next 40 years. H

Helen Carr is a historian and writer. Her latest book is *The Red Prince* (Oneworld, 2021)

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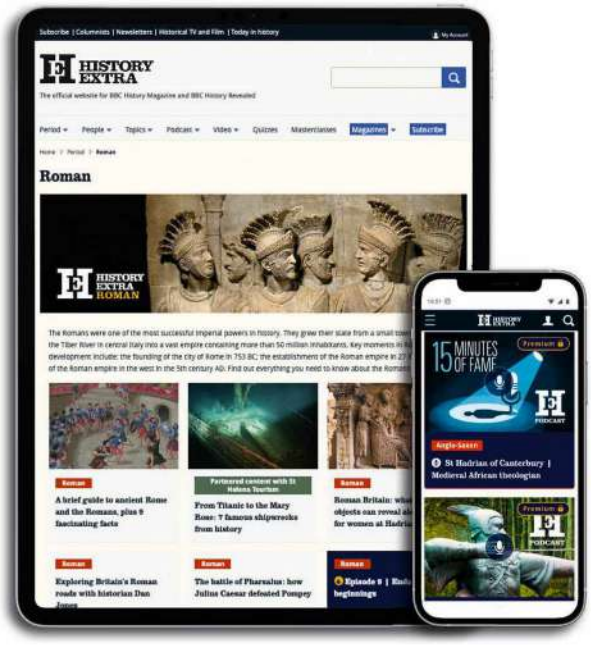

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Fern Riddell and **Nicola Tallis** discuss accuracy in period dramas

Siavush Randjbar-Daemi traces the roots of popular protest in Iran

Kavita Puri on the Ugandan Asians who started new lives in Britain

COMPILED BY **MATT ELTON**

THE CONVERSATION

Prime ministerial milestone
Rishi Sunak departs 10 Downing Street for parliament on 26 October 2022, the day after he officially became leader of the Conservative Party – and the UK's first prime minister of colour

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THE HISTORIAN'S VIEW

Sumita Mukherjee profiles the politicians of colour who paved **Rishi Sunak's road to No 10** – despite their vocal detractors

In October, Rishi Sunak became the first UK prime minister of colour, and the first Hindu to hold the top job. His grandparents were born in British India, his parents in east Africa, and he was born in Southampton in 1980.

The rise of politicians of south Asian descent in the Conservative Party during the 2020s is worth putting into its longer historical context. One of the first MPs of Indian ethnicity to be elected to the British parliament was Dadabhai Naoroji in 1892. Winning his seat in the London constituency of Central Finsbury by just five votes, he was given the nickname "Narrow-majority". An economist and professor of Gujarati, Naoroji was born in Bombay (now Mumbai) and was of Parsi faith. As a Liberal MP, he supported votes for women, pensions for the elderly, Irish Home Rule and the abolition of the House of Lords.

In 1886, Naoroji had campaigned unsuccessfully as the Liberal Party candidate for the strongly Conservative seat of Holborn in London. In December 1888, Conservative Party leader Lord Salisbury remarked of Naoroji's defeat that: "I doubt if we have yet got to the point of view where an English constituency would elect a Blackman." Criticised for his comment, Salisbury responded: "All I did was point out that you could not understand the meaning of the Holborn election in 1886 unless you remembered that the Liberal candidate was not only of a different race – widely separated from us – but that it was marked by his complexion."

> **"The election of Dadabhai Naoroji in 1892 disproved Lord Salisbury's theory that the English would not elect a man of colour"**

Naoroji's election in 1892 disproved Salisbury's theory that the English would not elect a man of colour, but many members of the British public shared such prejudices. When, in 1847, Lord John Russell had proposed to allow Jews to sit in parliament,

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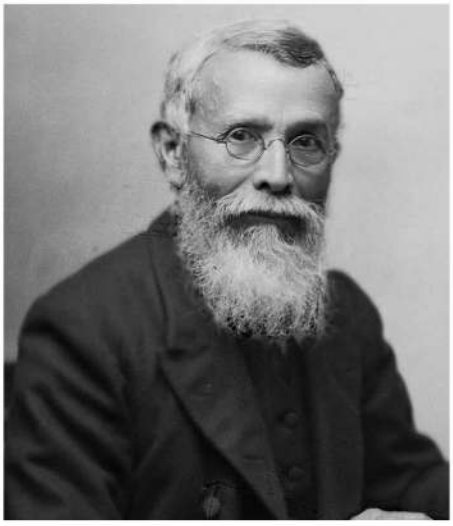


Dadabhai Naoroji was elected to parliament in 1892 despite an earlier dismissive remark by Conservative Party leader Lord Salisbury

Labour Party MP Diane Abbott, pictured in London in 1987, was the first black woman to be elected as a member of parliament in Britain

opponents warned that admitting Jewish people would open the way to the "Hindoo", the "Parsee" and the "victory of the Boodh".

In 1895, Naoroji lost his seat in a Conservative landslide. He stood again in 1906 as an independent Liberal candidate at Lambeth North, but was unsuccessful.

Immigration outrage

In 1895, Mancherjee Merwanjee Bhownaggree – another Parsi from Bombay – was elected as Conservative MP for the London constituency of North-East Bethnal Green. Bhownaggree campaigned vociferously on the issue of immigration, suggesting that east London had too many "foreign pauper aliens". He was given the nickname "Bow-and-agree" or "Bow-the-knee-and-agree"

"When Rishi Sunak was born in 1980, there had been no Asian members of parliament since 1929"

because of the way in which he towed the Conservative Party line. He was re-elected in 1900 but defeated in 1906.

The next south Asian MP in Britain was Shapurji Saklatvala. Another Parsi born in Bombay, Saklatvala won the seat of Battersea North in 1922 as the Labour candidate, but was defeated in December 1923. He regained the seat in October 1924, when he stood as a Communist representative – the only candidate from the Communist Party of Great Britain to succeed in that election. In 1926, during the General Strike, he was imprisoned following a speech he delivered in Hyde Park. He subsequently lost his seat in 1929.

Several other Indians, keen to raise issues of Indian politics at the heart of the empire, stood for election in the late 19th century. They included Lalmohan Ghosh, who campaigned as the Liberal candidate for Deptford in 1885; Nandalal Ghosh, who was accepted as a Liberal candidate for North Lambeth in 1888; and WC Bonnerjee, who stood as a Liberal in Barrow-in-Furness in 1895. A decade earlier, Naoroji and Bonnerjee had helped found the Indian National Congress, which campaigned for home rule. In his campaigns, Naoroji claimed to represent millions of Indians who had no democratic government of their own.

The long-standing colonial relationship between Britain and the Indian subcontinent is key to understanding the elections of Naoroji, Bhownaggree and Saklatvala. At the time, the primacy of Indian affairs for British politics meant the electorate was willing to vote for men of colour. Yet it is telling that these three men were all wealthy and had noticeably light skin, as was often the case for those of Parsi faith, who were of Persian descent. Their success highlights issues of faith, class, colourism and race.

No other MPs of colour were elected in Britain until the 1980s, which reflects the declining primacy of imperial politics in Britain and also the reluctance to vote for candidates who did not fit the mould of wealthy, loyal and elite gentlemen. The intersections of race and class, and the legacies of post-colonial migration, cannot be underestimated in understanding the rise to power of Sunak – who comes from a wealthy background, and enjoyed a public school and Oxbridge education.

Sunak's parents arrived in Britain in the same decade that Enoch Powell delivered his infamous "Rivers of Blood" speech, in which he stated: "In this country in 15 or 20 years' time, the black man will have the whip hand over the white man." When Sunak was born, there had not been any black MPs in Britain, and no Asians since Saklatvala lost his seat in 1929. It was only in 2002 that the first cabinet minister of colour was appointed: Paul Boateng, a black Labour MP and chief secretary to the Treasury. Sajid Javid became the first cabinet minister of south Asian heritage when he was appointed secretary of state for culture, media and sport in 2014.

Talking tough

Most of these examples have been men. The first woman of colour, and the first black woman to be elected as an MP in Britain, was Diane Abbott in 1987 – the same year that also saw the elections of Boateng, Bernie Grant and Keith Vaz. In 2010, Abbott came last in the election for leader of the Labour Party. In 2020, Lisa Nandy – daughter of an Indian academic – came third in the election for Labour Party leader.

Over the years, the Conservative Party has welcomed various politicians of colour, some of whom have talked tough about immigration in spite of their own families' migrant background. Bhownaggree was one, followed most recently by two of Sunak's contemporaries of south Asian and east African background: Priti Patel and Suella Braverman. Sunak's eligibility to be PM derives from the claims to Britishness of his grandparents and parents as citizens of former colonies of the empire, yet his party has often been reluctant to engage with the dark side of Britain's imperial past.

Sunak's appointment shows that ethnicity or faith need not be a barrier to the highest political appointment in the country. His premiership marks a milestone in British politics – but, given that he failed to win a vote among the party membership in the summer and is yet to face a general election, history still awaits the first UK prime minister of colour voted into that position by the electorate. H

GETTY IMAGES

Sumita Mukherjee is associate professor of modern history at the University of Bristol, and author of *Indian Suffragettes* (Oxford University Press, 2018)

Royalty and reality
Elizabeth Debicki as Diana, Princess of Wales in season five of *The Crown*. The series has attracted much attention for the way in which it portrays the royal family

NETFLIX

THE BIG QUESTION

Are period dramas ruining history?

The return of Netflix series *The Crown* has sparked debate about its take on the royal family. We spoke to historians **FERN RIDDELL** and **NICOLA TALLIS** about the extent to which it matters that dramas depict the past accurately, and the ethical issues raised by portraying real people and events on screen

Matt Elton How important is it that period dramas are historically accurate?

Fern Riddell Having worked as a historical consultant on period dramas, I feel strongly that historical accuracy is one of the most important elements when recreating the lives of our ancestors or an event from the past. If you're creating a total fantasy world set in the past, then of course accuracy is completely in the eye of the team making it. But even then, it still has a place – more in the texture and wider world than in aiming for a perfect recreation of a moment in time.

Nicola Tallis I agree, but I think it also depends on what the drama purports to be. If it's setting out to recreate real events and portray real people, then there is a greater expectation that it will depict those people and the events they lived through in an accurate way. But if it's creating a completely fictional drama set in the past, that obviously gives it a lot more freedom and artistic licence to dramatise events.

The TV drama *Harlots* is a great example of this. It's based on a non-fiction book [Hallie Rubenhold's 2005 *The Covent Garden Ladies*], but features completely fictional characters facing events and scenarios with which women would perhaps have been confronted at that time. It's a really good example of a historical drama that is loosely accurate, but which doesn't have quite the same responsibilities to the audience because it isn't based on real people.

ME That distinction is really interesting, particularly in relation to *The Crown*, which has recently attracted huge levels of commentary. Is there something about that series that makes it a flashpoint?

NT Absolutely. Members of the royal family are a source of fascination, and we feel that we know them even though they are actually quite distant figures. There is also a feeling of public ownership – that we have a right to know what goes on behind closed doors.

I also think that, even though *The Crown* presents itself as a drama loosely based on historical events, it still has a huge responsibility to portray its characters in a way that matches reality. We're having this conversation before its fifth season has been released, and already it's received criticism for its portrayal of Charles – particularly a completely fictitious scene in which he plans to overthrow his mother. To my mind, that's the most ridiculous piece of artistic licence. I think that any historical drama that helps engage an audience and encourages it to find out more is a good thing, but you wouldn't have to do too much digging to find out that – as far as we know – Charles never plotted to force Elizabeth II to abdicate.

FR This is one of the moments, though, in which we've slightly lost touch of what's real and what's fiction. I think that, both as commentators and as people involved in making these kinds of shows, we have a tendency to treat our audiences as if they're stupid. We're talking about drama here. It is a complete fiction, even when it deals with real people, people we feel connected to, or people living today. Dramatisations will always be fantasy. They will always employ creative licence. If you want to learn about something, watch a documentary. If you want to be captivated and excited by a world, watch a drama. There's a reason we study Shakespeare's historical plays in drama lessons and English language lessons rather than history lessons, and we need to understand that historical dramas are the same.

> **"Both as commentators and as people involved in making these shows, we have a tendency to treat audiences as if they are stupid"**
>
> FERN RIDDELL

Do dramas portray historians accurately? Hear more from Fern and Nicola at *historyextra.com/period-drama-pod*

"Should a real-life story not be told just because some of the people it involves are still alive? It's complicated"

NICOLA TALLIS

ME Do dramas that depict very recent history, or people who are still alive, involve greater moral issues and complications?

NT Yes, I definitely think so. One of the criticisms of the latest season of *The Crown* is that it depicts the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. What impact might that have on her sons, princes William and Harry? On the one hand, if you have a personal involvement in the story a drama is telling, it becomes very emotive, but equally, should a real-life story not be told just because people it involves are still alive? It's complicated.

FR This is absolutely about the ways in which we need to consider issues of ethics and morality in making historical drama. When you look at something like *Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story* [the recent Netflix drama about an American serial killer who murdered 17 men and boys between 1978 and 1991], I'd argue that's an instance in which a conversation about safeguarding that should have taken place appears not to have happened. It's a horrific, traumatising story, and the drama's creators should have asked: is this the right thing to do? Who are we serving by making this? Because it certainly isn't serving the people who have living memories of the victims.

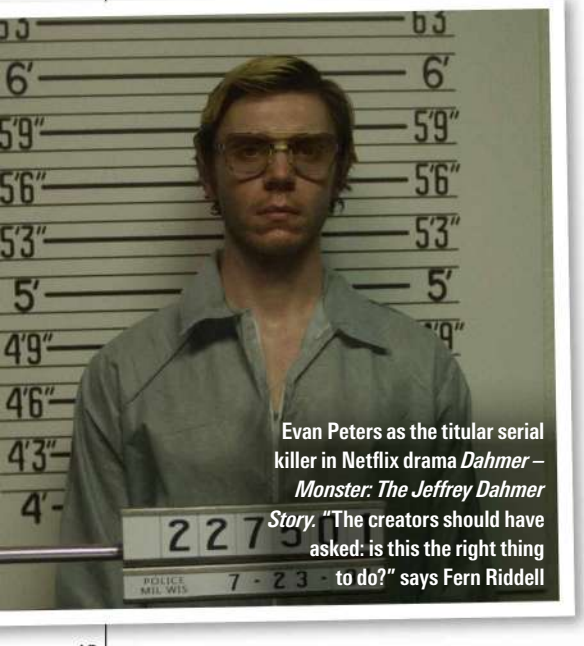
There are examples of dramas that have recreated recent and tragic events in careful, delicate, sensitive ways – and that should be the only thing guiding people who want to make those kinds of dramas. If it's clear that the people directly involved do not want a series made or do not agree with the telling, then I think creatives need to understand that any backlash will be entirely justified.

ME Do the opportunities that dramas offer to attract new audiences outweigh the potential problems of morality and accuracy we've been discussing?

NT When we're representing people and events in recent memory, morality and ethics always have to come first. Equally, I think we have a huge responsibility to give a voice to people who lived in the past, whether recently or centuries ago. And we need to ensure that we tell their stories as accurately as possible within the boundaries of historical drama – allowing for the fact that, because we don't have all of the answers, it is sometimes acceptable to speculate or fictionalise.

FR Nothing should outweigh morality or historical accuracy. But, again, accurate history doesn't mean recreating something word for word. It just means using good research and good historical consultancy to make your shows. That can be astounding to audiences, and far more challenging than anything you might invent.

The third season of *Ripper Street* [the BBC drama for which Riddell acted as historical consultant], for instance, featured a female doctor in the East End of London in the 1890s selling birth control to her clients. A lot of people reacted on Twitter, saying: "This would never have happened!" – so I got to spend that night replying that, actually, it was based on my PhD research. It was one of the best moments I've ever had as a historian, because I reached more people with my research in a single night than I would have ever taught in my entire career as an academic. H



Evan Peters as the titular serial killer in Netflix drama *Dahmer – Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*. "The creators should have asked: is this the right thing to do?" says Fern Riddell

Fern Riddell is a historian, author and historical consultant whose books include *Sex: Lessons from History* (Hodder and Stoughton, 2021)

Nicola Tallis is a historian, author and historical consultant. Her most recent book is *All the Queen's Jewels, 1445–1548: Power, Majesty and Display* (Routledge, 2022)

HISTORY NEWS IN BRIEF

Rare Roman mosaic unearthed in Syria

An intact 1,600-year-old mosaic discovered in Syria has been hailed as one of the most important archaeological finds in the country since war broke out 11 years ago. "What is in front of us is a discovery that is rare on a global scale," Hamman Saad of the General Directorate of Museums and Antiquities told the *Associated Press*. The large (around 120 square metres) mosaic in Rastan, near Homs, includes depictions of the Trojan War, the Roman sea god Neptune and 40 of his mistresses, plus – unusually – Amazon warriors.

The ancient Roman mosaic recently discovered in Syria, depicting the Roman sea god Neptune

Skeletons found under former department store

The remains of 240 people, almost half of them children, have been found by archaeologists digging on the site of the Ocky White department store in Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire. Excavations unearthed ruins believed to be those of St Saviour's Priory, founded in 1246. Some of the bones reveal signs of injuries sustained in battle, perhaps during an attack led by Owain Glyndŵr in 1405. After analysis, the bones will be reburied in consecrated ground.

Easter Island statues damaged by wildfire

A blaze that swept through Rapa Nui National Park on Easter Island has caused "irreparable damage" to a number of the ancient stone-carved monuments known as *moai*. These giant stone heads were created by the original Polynesian inhabitants of the South Pacific island; modern islanders hold the *moai* to be spiritually significant, embodying their living ancestors. The mayor of the island, now governed by Chile, has said that he believes the fire was not accidental. H

NETFLIX/GETTY IMAGES

Mass movement
Supporters of Iranian prime minister Mohammad Mosaddegh march through the streets of Tehran in July 1953. The history of popular protest in Iran stretches back to the 1940s

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BACKGROUNDER

The turbulent history of **mass protests in Iran**

Since mid-September, crowds have taken to the streets of Tehran in response to violence against women allegedly perpetrated by security forces of the Islamic Republic. **SIAVUSH RANDJBAR-DAEMI** traces the roots of unrest in Iran from the Second World War onwards

On 13 September 2022, Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish woman, was arrested in Tehran for allegedly violating strict government rules that require women to wear a hijab, or head covering. Three days later, she died in hospital. Eyewitnesses said that Mahsa – her official Iranian name, although her family and friends use her Kurdish name, Zhina – was beaten over the head in a police van after her arrest. Iranian police claimed that she suffered a heart attack. The case sparked protests against the Islamic Republic authorities, reigniting unrest that has flared up on several occasions since 2009. But those protests also have deeper roots in a longer history of popular unrest in Iran, dating back to the 1940s when new forms of politics entered the country as a consequence of the Anglo-Soviet invasion of 1941 and the Allies' installation of the last Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

The rise to power of prime minister Mohammad Mosaddegh in 1951, and his polarising championing of the nationalisation of the oil industry, was accompanied by frequent street gatherings by the banned but popular communist Tudeh Party and its (western-supported) rightwing opponents. In July 1952, three days of confrontation between citizens enraged by the Shah's dismissal of Mosaddegh and the royal army resulted in the first and only instance of a prime minister being reinstated by the monarch through a popular uprising.

> **"Ayatollah Khomeini's arrest prompted crowds to take to the streets in an uprising that became a foundational myth of the Islamic Republic"**

On 19 August 1953, a crowd organised by the CIA and MI6 overthrew Mosaddegh and gained the upper hand over his supporters, who had filled the streets after the first attempt to unseat the prime minister failed. The Shah, whose influence over Iranian politics had weakened during Mosaddegh's premiership, regained power – with an accompanying increase in state repression.

The Shah's autocratic rule kept a lid on the recurrence of opposition and protests until 1963, when a new, prominent religious and political figure, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, emerged. His harsh sermon against the Shah and subsequent arrest prompted crowds to take to the streets that June, in protests that were initially deemed "reactionary" by the communist Tudeh party in exile. This uprising has since featured as a foundational myth of the Islamic Republic.

Revolutionary rage

The revolution of 1978–79 was the next and, arguably, most important event sparked by crowd action. Spurred on by the failure of the Shah to engage with internal dissidents demanding reform, the onset of nationwide anger – following the publication of three scurrilous articles against Khomeini in the state-controlled press in early 1978 – marked the start of a long cycle of anti-regime protests. These culminated in the Ashura and Tasua protests of December 1978, named for the two consecutive important days in the Shia calendar on which they took place. The initial phases of the 1978 protest movement share some similarities with the current uprisings: the protesters' main demands soon went beyond incremental changes to the status quo and focused instead on the ejection from power of the ruling establishment and in particular, the Shah himself.

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The helm of the protests of 1978 was eventually taken by Khomeini, who stepped into a key leadership role to become the undisputed head of the Iranian Revolution by the time of the Shah's departure from the country in January 1979 and the collapse of the monarchy the following month. But he never articulated what his preferred alternative state structure would look like, beyond broad and vague assurances on a just Islamic system.

Repression and rebellion

The new Islamic Republic, ushered in through a referendum in March 1979, did not achieve a monopoly over power until the autumn of 1981. Over its first two and a half years, it evolved from an initially peaceful broad revolutionary coalition to the steadily monocratic rule of Khomeini and his closest disciples and allies. As early as 8 March 1979, a large group of women took to Tehran's streets to voice concern about the impending restrictions on their civil rights and their fears regarding the likely imposition of veiling.

The banning of the daily newspaper *Ayandegan* – a beacon for protest groups – that August contributed to the first instance since the revolution of serious political violence in Tehran, when a demonstration was thoroughly repressed by pro-Khomeini forces. The impeachment of the Islamic Republic's first elected president, Abolhassan Bani-Sadr, in June 1981 was opposed by the last major anti-regime demonstration in Tehran for nearly two decades, as tens – and possibly hundreds – of thousands of sympathisers of radical leftist groups opposed to his dismissal took to the streets. In the following months, thousands were imprisoned and executed.

More recent years have witnessed the emergence of street protests by generations of Iranians with no memory of those earlier events. In 1999, central Tehran was rocked for the first time since 1981 by four days of commotion following the banning of a reformist newspaper popular with students at the University of Tehran. In 2009, supporters of the two defeated presidential candidates, Mir-Hossein Mousavi and Mehdi Karroubi, went on the march as the establishment shut off all avenues for a compromise. Following the massive rally on 15 June 2009, the Green Movement – demanding competitive elections featuring their leaders – continued its street presence until early 2011, when Mousavi and Karroubi were placed under house arrest, where they remain.

The protests of 2017 and 2018 took a different direction, generated by economic and welfare concerns and calling for the downfall of the Islamic Republic. This latter aim has emerged once again amid the determined rejection of compulsory veiling by women and men of all ages across the country.

Waves of protest Supporters of opposition presidential candidates campaign before Iran's 2009 election. The Green Movement took to the streets again after the incumbent Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was declared the winner

> **"Recent months have seen the resurgence of anti-regime sentiment comparable to the early stages of the revolution"**

Street protests since 1979 share similarities. They were often spurred by instances of strong disenchantment and even rage against the existing state leadership. The suppression of the Green Movement in 2009 and civil society since the millennium have meant that the most recent waves of protests have often emerged through an unpredictable spark. In the absence of an organised overall domestic leadership, they have often progressed without a clear or focused outcome or aim. Instead, more atomised forms of resistance, often coalescing on slogans devised on the fly and spread via social media, have replaced protests created and led by prominent figures or political organisations.

Next-generation protests

Recent months have seen the resurgence of a level of anti-regime sentiment comparable to the early stages of the revolution of 1978–79. The current "Woman, Life, Freedom" protest has now become the longest continuous anti-state protest in Iran since the revolution. In much the same way as the 40th-day mourning ceremony for the deceased – a key Shia ritual – acted as a catalyst for the progression of the protests in 1978, the 40th day since Amini's death marked a resurgence of unrest in more than 30 cities. The epicentre has been in the Kurdish city of Saqqez, where Amini is buried. The 40th-day commemoration of the death of another protester, 16-year-old Nika Shakarami, continued this trend. Scattered strikes, notably in Kurdistan province and in parts of the oil industry, are also on the rise.

The targeting of the sartorial code imposed by the state, and of gender inequality, also creates a highly symbolic link between the current protests and those enacted by feminists and civil society activists in the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Shah. This underscores the resilience of societal opposition to the state impositions across generations. It remains to be seen whether the present rage will be channelled towards the formulation of an alternative to the Islamic Republic, which remains elusive despite the aspirations of many Iranian people for a different future. H

Siavush Randjbar-Daemi is lecturer in modern Middle Eastern history, University of St Andrews, and author of *The Quest for Authority in Iran* (IB Tauris, 2017)

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"In just a few months they had started a new life in a new country"

FIFTY YEARS AGO, IN THE SUMMER OF 1972, ON the orders of Ugandan president Idi Amin, south Asians living in the country were given three months to leave. In an address on 5 August, Amin said, "I am going to ask Britain to take over responsibility for all Asians in Uganda who are holding British passports, because they are sabotaging the economy of the country."

British headlines warned of an influx of tens of thousands from Uganda. There were those, including Conservative MP Enoch Powell, who argued against taking them in. The UK did look into settling some in other countries, including the Solomon Islands or the Falklands. But after much debate in parliament, Conservative prime minister Edward Heath allowed more than 28,000 into Britain.

Many arrived penniless and homeless, only to face hostility in Britain. The Ugandan south Asians who started to arrive were referred to by officials as "refugees", despite the fact that they were UK passport holders.

The presence of south Asians in Uganda was a legacy of empire. The first arrived as indentured labourers at the end of the 19th century to build the railway; later, Indians were brought to Uganda to serve in the British colonial administration as subordinates to the ruling class. Others had come to Uganda after 1947 as refugees following partition; having been displaced once from the subcontinent, many then found themselves having to move nation once again as a result of Amin's edict.

In 1972, the British government set up the Uganda Resettlement Board to control the flow of the arrivals. It was aimed at diverting the newcomers away from cities such as Leicester, London and Birmingham in which large immigrant communities already existed and where there was already pressure on housing and education – as well as to stave off a backlash of racism. Soon after Amin's announcement, for instance, Leicester City Council ran newspaper adverts in the *Uganda Argus* newspaper discouraging south Asians from settling in the city.

On reaching Britain, new arrivals with no family or friends to stay with were put up by the state. Many made their way to resettlement centres in England and Wales until they found housing and employment. The Ministry of Defence had earmarked disused army and Royal Air Force barracks around the country. There were 16 in total, spread across Suffolk, Lincolnshire, Kent, Berkshire, Devon, Somerset, Dorset, Staffordshire, Gwynedd, Warwickshire, Surrey, Sussex and London.

Oral history projects are now collecting the memories of those who came, and of the British volunteers who helped in the resettlement centres, giving food, toys and warm clothes, teaching English, and sometimes offering a weekend respite in their homes. One such project focuses on the Welsh village of Tonfanau which, for around six months, housed hundreds of arrivals. The recordings reveal how scared they looked on coming to the rural area, and the ways in which locals helped out the newly arrived Ugandan south Asians, many becoming lifelong friends.

It is notable that our collective memory of this period does not recall those resettlement centres, which briefly housed thousands of traumatised people. Historian and academic Ian Sanjay Patel, author of the excellent 2021 book *We're Here Because You Were There,* argues this is because the resettlement centres "speak to the fundamental ambiguity and ambivalence that surrounded Ugandan Asians' claim on Britain", adding the question: "Was the arrival of Ugandan Asians in Britain a refugee emergency, a sudden inflow of British nationals in possession of British passports, or a spike in immigration?"

The last resettlement centre closed on 15 January 1974, by which point around 21,000 Ugandan Asians had passed through them at some point. In just a few months, these people had started a new life in a new home in a new country.

Patel argues that officials placed the Ugandan Asians within a tradition of British largesse towards refugees – in the same vein as British responses to displaced persons in the wake of the Second World War and Hungarian refugees in 1956. "But such remembering strains against an awareness and memory of Ugandan Asians as unwanted 'coloured immigrants'," he writes. "Their true status as British nationals was lost amid these two viewpoints." H

Kavita Puri is a journalist and broadcaster for BBC Radio 4 whose history series include *Three Pounds in My Pocket*. She is also the author of *Partition Voices: Untold British Histories* (Bloomsbury, 2009)

BBC RADIO 4

ANDREW DENNY

Children of south Asian heritage expelled from Uganda at a camp in Britain in the 1970s. A new project is recording the memories of immigrants and their hosts

MICHAEL WOOD ON...
THE LEGACY OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT

"In the west we have been dazzled by the myth of history's golden boy"

I WAS AT THE BRITISH LIBRARY THE OTHER DAY for the opening of a fascinating exhibition on the legend of Alexander the Great. Instead of spelling out the history of the fourth century BC, it makes use of manuscript paintings, books and images to examine the extraordinary myth that has grown up over more than two millennia.

Along with the tales of King Arthur, the Alexander legends are one of the great story cycles of the western world. There are epics in Old French, Serbian, German, Polish and Russian, plus an Icelandic Alexander saga and an Ethiopian Alexander romance. He's in the Talmud and (most think) in the Bible and the Koran. Meanwhile, in the eastern world, Alexander epics can be found in Iran, Mughal India and Mongolia. And that's not to mention the movies, cartoons, animé and comic books. But their subject is not the historical king of Macedon, it is the superman who dived to the bottom of the ocean in a diving bell, ascended the heavens in a chariot pulled by griffins, and who found the tree of everlasting life. All testimony to the incredible afterlife of one of history's great events.

More than 20 years ago we made a series of films following Alexander's route from Greece to India through Iran, Afghanistan and central Asia. On that journey we encountered the legend at first hand. In Iran one of the *Naqqāls*, the traditional tale-tellers, gave a scintillating performance of the Persian poet Ferdowsi's version from 1010, which told that Alexander's real mother was Persian and hence he was a true Iranian Shah. In the Great Salt Desert the Zoroastrians told us tales of Iskandar Gujaste ("Alexander the Accursed"), the hated one "who destroyed our sacred books and forced our girls to marry Greeks against their will". In Pakistan's North-West Frontier, the Kalash (the pagans of Chitral) claimed descent from his army, from the men who stayed on.

In Uzbekistan we met an old storyteller, who told us that even the Koran itself tells the tale of the great Iskandar – calling him Zhul Carnain, the "two horned one". Not, he said, because of the famous image on coins where Alexander is depicted wearing the ram horns of Ammon, but because he really did have horns! "But he had beautiful long wavy hair which concealed them. So no one knew his secret – except his barber!"

Fantastic stories, then, with an unbelievable range of visual images, which are testimony to the spread of the myth of history's golden boy. But the history itself is another matter. In the west we have been dazzled by his story. British imperial historians like William Tarn saw Alexander as a visionary idealist, a benevolent empire-builder in their own mould, pursuing the dream of uniting humanity under one rule, irrespective of race. This idea informed the Richard Burton movie *Alexander the Great* (1956), a case of the victors telling the story.

The alternative tale is now being recovered from fragments: from oracles, prophecies, pieces of cuneiform and scraps of papyrus. Modern historians like Brian Bosworth have constructed a different image, of a brutal conquistador rampaging through ancient civilisations.

When Oliver Stone was planning his 2004 *Alexander* movie, I talked to his producer about what they called the "negative ending problem" of his story – the steep falling-off of the king's career after his return from India. Do you still go for the idealised Alexander of Hollywood? Or, as I suggested, do you have a typical Stone take on the brutality of war, like *Salvador* or *Platoon*, with conspiracy thrown in, like *JFK*? I thought the story was made for the latter, but they didn't bite: Hollywood couldn't take a hero who did terrible things and died of drink (or was it poison?).

In October, the charity Classics for All held a moot (simulated hearing) in the UK Supreme Court, putting Alexander on trial for war crimes, prosecuted by the human rights lawyer Philippe Sands. The truth is, empires in their nature are violent, whether Macedonians, Romans or Brits. We are so seduced by the grand narrative of the victors that we don't pry too far into the actual history: the crucifixion of the survivors in Tyre; the massacre of civilians in India; or the case of the city of the Branchidae, where a 150-year-old betrayal by their ancestors condemned them to death. As the newspaper editor says in the John Ford film *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*: "When the legend becomes fact, print the legend!" H

Michael Wood is professor of public history at the University of Manchester. He has presented numerous BBC series, and is the author of *In the Footsteps of Alexander the Great* (BBC, 1997). His Twitter handle is @mayavision

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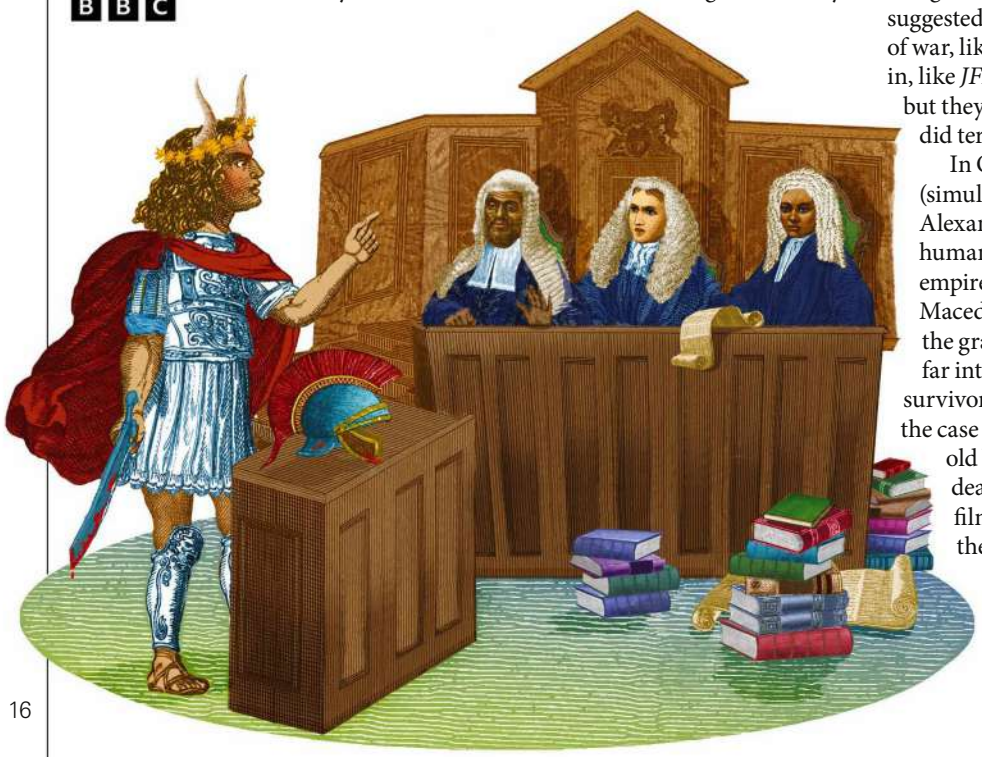
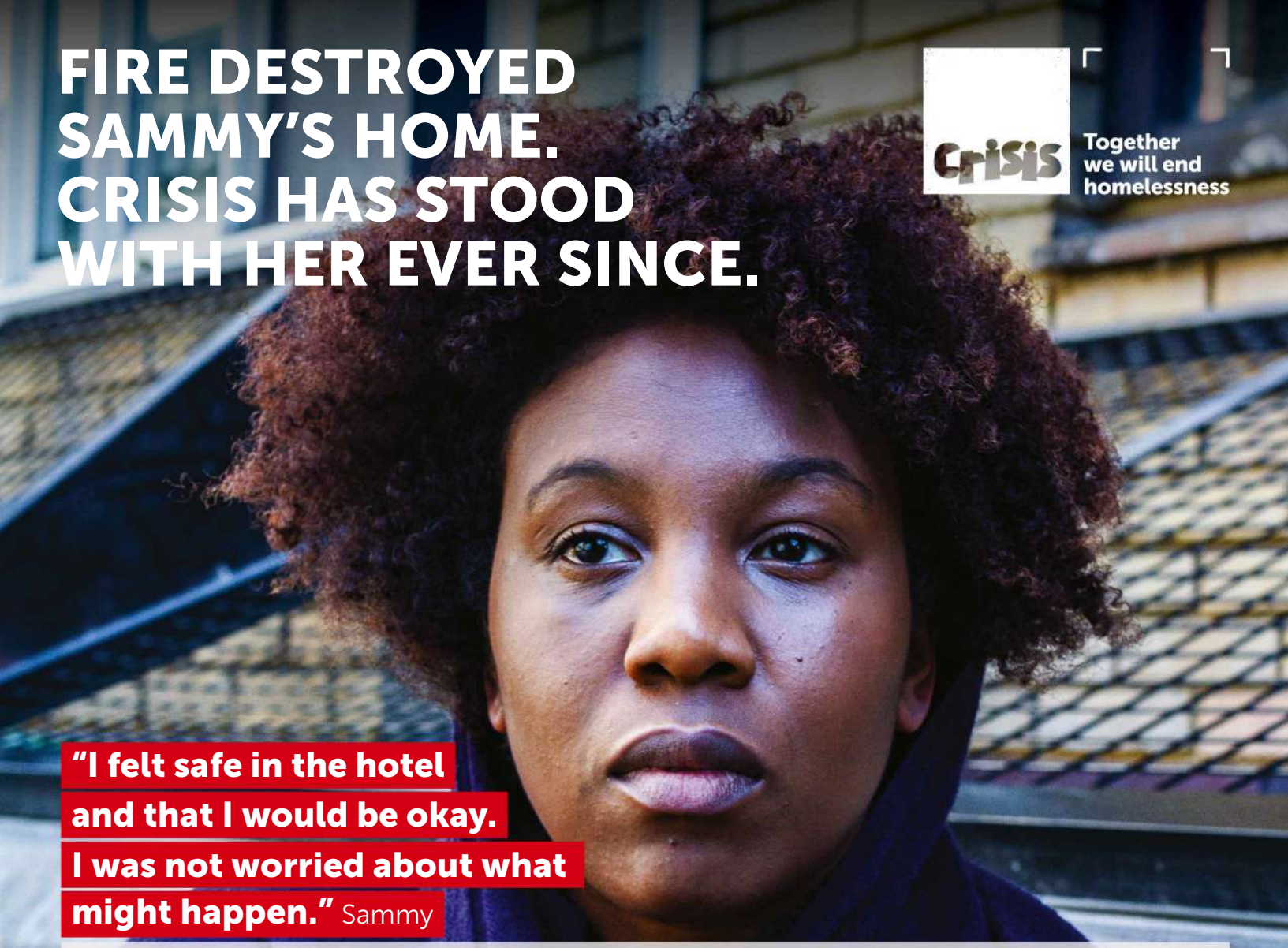


ILLUSTRATION BY **FEMKE DE JONG**

FIRE DESTROYED SAMMY'S HOME. CRISIS HAS STOOD WITH HER EVER SINCE.

Crisis

Together we will end homelessness



"I felt safe in the hotel and that I would be okay. I was not worried about what might happen." Sammy

After a fire destroyed her home, Sammy was sent to a hostel, carrying severe trauma. **"I was worried all the time."**

At the hostel, Sammy heard about Crisis. She came to Crisis at Christmas, where she was cared for, given food, vital advice, and offered a room at a Crisis hotel over Christmas.

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This story reflects a real person's experience, but their name and photo have been changed to protect their identity.
Photo: Munya Chidakwa

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LETTERS

Harry S Truman predicted how the Cold War would end, says reader William Jolliffe

LETTER OF THE MONTH

A regal relative

In November's *Letters*, Jenny Martin requested a feature on Queen Margaret of Scotland (c1045–93). However, the Saxon Princess Margaret of Wessex – as she was also known – is not all she seems.

Rightly revered as a saint, her legacy was, though, not at first appreciated in Scotland. On her death – days after that of her husband, Malcolm III – the perceived Anglicisation of the Scottish court and church was immediately overturned, and the royal children were forced into exile in England.

Margaret's marriage to Malcolm III was a political move to advance the cause of her brother, Edgar Ætheling. Both Edgar – the Saxon claimant to the English throne usurped by William the Conqueror – and Margaret were direct descendants of Alfred the Great. However, events – and the Conqueror – conspired against them. By 1068 (two years after William's invasion of England), Margaret and Edgar were fleeing north.

Edgar never took the English throne, and nor did Margaret's sons. However, her daughter, Edith (later known as Matilda), married Henry I of England. And Matilda's grandson, Henry II – first of the Plantagenet dynasty of English monarchs – challenged the Norman hold on England.

Perhaps I should write the feature on Queen Margaret of Scotland – being her 23-times great-granddaughter!
June Fox, Chester

We reward the Letter of the Month writer with a copy of a new history book. This issue, that is **In Search of the Dark Ages** by Michael Wood. Michael appears in our Books of the Year piece on page 72

Prescient president

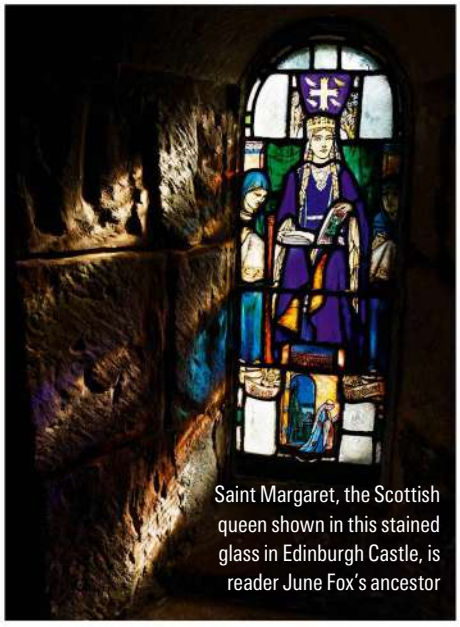
Your article by David Reynolds, Kristina Spohr and Evan Mawdsley about Mikhail Gorbachev was very helpful (*Cold War Hero or Failed Idealist?*, November). I believe Gorbachev's death is an apt moment to recall the foresight of Harry S Truman (US president 1945–53). Through the creation of the United Nations, Nato and the Marshall plan, his administration resisted the Soviet Union after 1945, and he is acknowledged by most historians as one of the great US presidents.

In his final speech as president, Truman outlined how he thought the Cold War would end: "As the free world grows stronger, more united, more attractive… there will have to come a time of change in the Soviet world… by revolution, or trouble in the satellite states, or by a change inside the Kremlin."

His words proved remarkably prescient. And he spoke them on 15 January 1953 – more than 30 years before Gorbachev came to power, when Ronald Reagan was still an actor and a Democrat, and Pope John Paul II was a parish priest in Poland.
William Jolliffe, Oxford

Screen heroes

I read with interest Robert Lyman's review of the book *Devil Dogs* by Saul David (December) about the role of US marines in the war in the Pacific. In the opening paragraph, he suggested that the book should be made into a TV miniseries, the Pacific equivalent of *Band of Brothers*. In fact, the makers of that show have already produced an excellent 10-part TV series, *The Pacific*, accompanied by a book of the same name, based on true accounts by the marines who fought in that theatre of war.
Adrian Bunn, Cheshire



Saint Margaret, the Scottish queen shown in this stained glass in Edinburgh Castle, is reader June Fox's ancestor

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

Hell in America

Thank you for the excellent article on prison ships (*Floating Hell*, October) – an almost-forgotten bit of history that deserved a good airing. But an equally forgotten relative to this story also merits a mention. At Fort Greene Park in Brooklyn, New York, stands the Prison Ship Martyrs' Monument. It is a memorial to the more than 11,000 American colonial prisoners of war who died aboard 16 British prison ships in New York Harbor during the American Revolutionary War. We need to remember all those poor wretches who lived, suffered and died in such abominable conditions, regardless of which side of the ocean they were on.
Charles W Shay, New York

Britain's last prison ship?

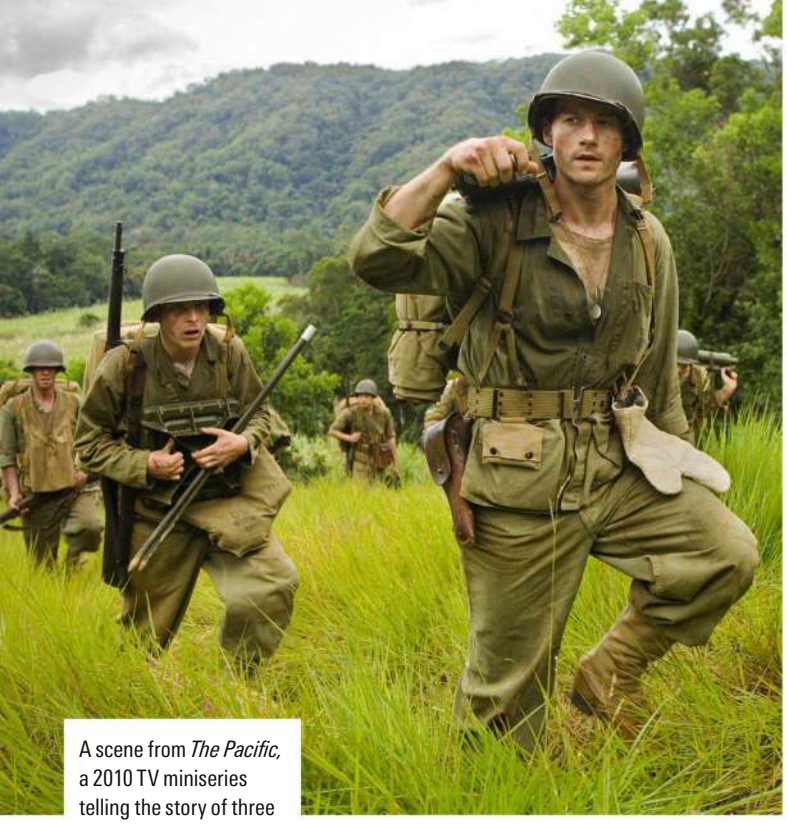
From 2000 to 2001, I taught on HMP Weare, a prison ship moored in Portland Harbour, in which men serving the last three to nine months of their sentences were held. It was not a healthy place – that's why it was shut down – though nothing in comparison to the Victorian hulks described in your article.

Prisoners had only one hour of fresh air each day, and there were no opening windows, nor an adequate air-conditioning system. As a result, a high number of both prisoners and staff became sick with respiratory illnesses; one colleague came down with pleurisy. I believe that HMP Weare may have been the last prison ship used in the UK.
Charlotte Troubridge, Portland

Special source

Please exonerate Herodotus from the accusation that he constructed a lie in his description of the building of Egypt's Great Pyramid (*Why We Need to Get Our Facts Straight*, November). He made it clear that he was relying on what he was told by the priests – the "father of history" initiating the most important historiographical tradition: acknowledging his source. He cannot be held responsible for the failure of succeeding historians to recognise this evidence.
Hugh Hollinghurst, Liverpool

Robert Blackmore replies:
Herodotus indeed often cited his sources in his *Histories*, including for the building of the pyramid of Khufu (Cheops) at Giza. In this he certainly applied an essential historiographical convention, even



A scene from *The Pacific*, a 2010 TV miniseries telling the story of three US marines during the Second World War. This ten-part series is the Pacific equivalent of *Band of Brothers*, writes Adrian Bunn

though we can't verify if he himself initiated it. Yet citing sources is one thing; the next step would be to analyse those sources critically. In this, Herodotus was notably lacking. Instead, he continued an ancient Ionian narrative tradition from near his birthplace in what's now Turkey.

He was a master of assembling information, but without applying any systematic historical methodology. For this reason, his near contemporary Thucydides implied that Herodotus remained a "*logos*-writer": a storyteller, one "less interested in reveling the truth than in catching the attention of their public, whose authorities cannot be checked, and whose subject matter, owing to the passage of time, is mostly lost in the unreliable streams of mythology".

Elusive truth

I very much enjoyed Robert Blackmore's article on the importance of getting our facts straight. It occurs to me that so many people – professional historians included – present as fact the suggestion that Richard III killed the princes in the Tower. He may have done, but this remains speculation and conjecture, and should always be presented as such. Sadly, we are never likely to discover the exact truth of the matter.

Chris Ward, Sheffield

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Page 48

Doomed insurrection
A detail from a memorial in St Ives to the Western Rising (left), and a (colourised) woodcut from Frances Rose-Troup's book about the rebellion (right). Some 4,000 people from Devon and Cornwall died when the rising was quashed

Tudor rebellion

In 1549, thousands of people in Devon and Cornwall rose up in revolt against Edward VI's religious policies. **Mark Stoyle** asks whether the so-called Prayer Book Rebellion could have toppled the Tudor state

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On Whit Monday 1549, William Underhill and William Seagar – two respectable inhabitants of the little Devon village of Sampford Courtenay – got into an argument with their vicar at the parish church. They told him that they disliked the new Book of Common Prayer in English, which had recently been introduced by an act of parliament and which he had read in church the day before. They urged him to revert to the traditional service in Latin instead and, after some debate, he acceded to their request.

Within hours, the church had become the centre of a popular demonstration against the Protestantising religious policies of Edward VI, which sought to remove all vestiges of the traditional Catholic faith. Within days, that protest had spread to the surrounding country parishes, and within weeks it had engulfed the whole of Devon and Cornwall. Self-appointed captains soon emerged to lead the protesters, prominent among them being Underhill and Seagar themselves. In July they assembled an army of common people and laid siege to the regional capital, Exeter. From there, they sent a list of demands to the government in London, insisting that all further moves towards Protestantism should come to a halt, and that the Church of England should be restored to the position in which it had been left by the king's father, Henry VIII, at the time of his death.

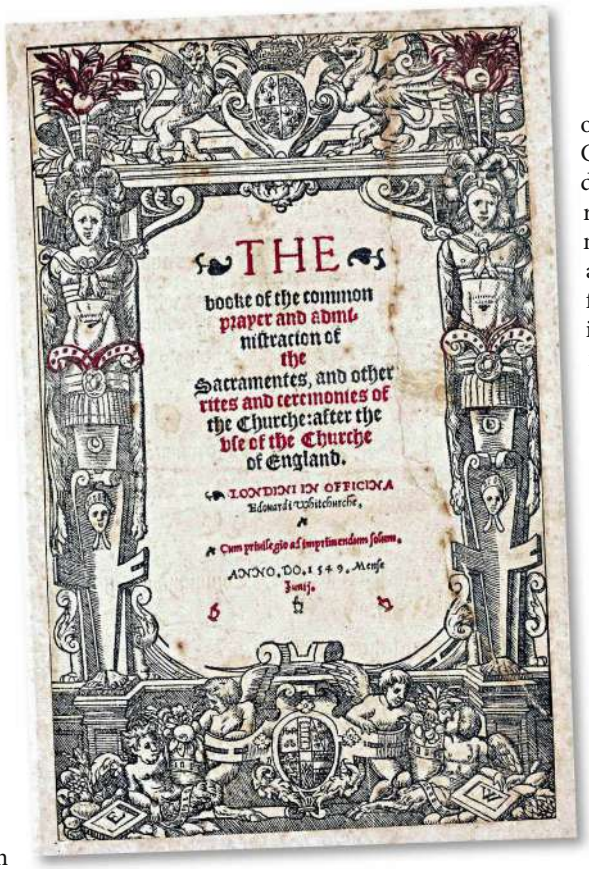
The rising is widely remembered today as the "Prayer Book Rebellion". This epithet perhaps suggests a somewhat softer episode – more like a theological debate – than the bloody reality. In truth, the strength of feeling among the "rebels" fuelled a rapid and violent response to enforcement of the Protestant Reformation. And, as I will reveal, new analysis shows that the rising wasn't merely a minor, localised "stir", but came close to succeeding in its goals in the West Country – and even in the very seat of government.

Russell vs the rebels

Lord Russell had been sent down from London to quell the disturbances. Vastly outnumbered by protesters and finding it almost impossible to raise local support, he was forced to dispatch a series of desperate pleas for help to the government. Only after Russell had been sent substantial reinforcements – including several bands of hardened mercenary soldiers from Italy, Burgundy and Albania – was he finally able to break through the besieging forces and advance, to relieve Exeter.

Russell's troubles were not yet over. His opponents had regrouped at Sampford Courtenay, from where they continued to defy him. Russell gathered still more reinforcements, and in mid-August he marched out from Exeter at the head of an army of 8,000 men. With this force he finally crushed the protesters, slaughtering them in a brutal, day-long battle fought out amid the fields and hedgerows surrounding the village where the trouble had initially begun. Scores of captured rebels were subsequently executed, with at least one local priest being hanged in chains from his own church tower.

The civilian population also suffered. A contemporary writer noted that, in the wake of the rebels' defeat, Russell's troops "ravage[d] the land, as did the foreign horsemen… who did great destruction in the country… by taking goods, as well as by capturing people and forcing them to pay ransom like soldiers".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booke of the common prayer and admi- nistracion of the Sacramentes, and other rites and ceremonies of the Churche: after the vse of the Churche of England.
LONDINI IN OFFICINA
Edouardi Whitchurche,
Cum priuilegio ad imprimendum solum.
ANNO. DO. 1549. Mense Iunij.

Mind your language

An edict enforcing the use of the English-language Book of Common Prayer (above). This was one of several Protestantising religious policies of the young king Edward VI (below) that sparked protests among Catholics and religious conservatives in Devon and Cornwall

Scores of captured rebels were executed – and at least one local priest was hanged in chains from his own church tower

Crushing the uprising

According to the best contemporary estimate, the insurrection resulted in the deaths of some 4,000 "rebels". Bearing in mind how much smaller the population of the West Country was in the 16th century than it is today, this was an enormous figure. Indeed, it seems fair to suggest that the so-called Western Rising of 1549 was the single most traumatic event in the region's history between the Black Death of the 1340s and the Civil War of the mid-17th century.

The insurrection was the most determined attempt to reverse the course of the English Reformation, yet for centuries its importance has been overlooked by historians. This is partly because we know surprisingly little about it. And much of what we do know comes from a single writer, the antiquarian John Hooker. Born in Exeter, Hooker was still in his twenties when he helped to defend the city against the insurgents. This experience obviously had a profound effect upon him because he later wrote a series of increasingly detailed accounts of what he termed "the Commotion or Rebellion in the counties of Devon and Cornwall". ("The Commotion" was the conveniently neutral term subsequently used by local people to refer to the rising.)

Without Hooker's accounts we would know almost nothing about how the protests began or what happened during the siege of Exeter. All of the subsequent histories of the insurrection have been based chiefly on his testimony. It is important to stress, though, that Hooker's accounts, which were composed during the reign of the Protestant Elizabeth I, were written from a very particular standpoint. Hooker himself was both an ardent Protestant and a proud Exonian. He had no sympathy for the

ALAMY

In the path of the rebellion
Mark Stoyle and Charlotte Hodgman paid a visit to nine sites connected to the 1549 uprising: *historyextra.com/prayer-book-rebellion*

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City under siege
A 16th-century map of the old walled city of Exeter, which was besieged by the rebels for five weeks in the summer of 1549 before the forces of John Russell crushed the insurrection

Armed response
German Landesknechte (mercenaries), depicted in an etching of c1530. Many experienced foreign soldiers were recruited to help quell the rebellion

TIMELINE
The story of an insurrection

1547
Disquiet brews in Devon and Cornwall as proponents of the Reformation challenge religious conservatives.

21 January 1549
The Act of Uniformity establishes the new Book of Common Prayer as the only legal liturgy in England, replacing Latin missals.

10 June 1549
On Whit Monday, parishioners of Sampford Courtenay in mid-Devon decry the introduction of the Book of Common Prayer. Within days, the protests have spread across Devon and throughout Cornwall, with "captains" assembling an army of local men.

c18 June 1549
Lord Russell, the former lord president of the Council of the West, is sent from London to quell the rising – initially with only a small band of troops.

2 July 1549
Protesters outside Exeter, bolstered by volunteer forces – thousands later arriving from Cornwall under the leadership of Humphrey Arundell – begin a siege of the city that lasts five weeks.

c29 July 1549
Having penetrated no farther west than Honiton, Russell is confronted by a rebel advance and wins a pivotal battle at Fenny Bridges just west of the town.

6 August 1549
After finally receiving reinforcements, including foreign mercenaries, Russell's army arrives in Exeter, where the siege is lifted.

17 August 1549
Having regrouped at Sampford Courteney, the protesters are routed by Russell's 8,000-strong army in a bloody one-day clash. Hundreds of rebels die in the battle and subsequent repression.

27 January 1550
Leaders of the rising who had been imprisoned in the Tower, including Humphrey Arundell, are hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn in London. The rising is comprehensively crushed.

protesters, whom he dismissed as "Papists" (Catholics); his writings chiefly aimed to celebrate their defeat and to commemorate the role Exeter played in it.

Moreover, because he had spent that summer confined to the city, Hooker was not as well informed as he might otherwise have been about the developments that had taken place elsewhere. His view of the insurrection is very much that of the man on the Exeter city walls, in other words. And because Hooker's accounts were relied upon so heavily by later historians – including Frances Rose-Troup, whose formidable book *The Western Rebellion of 1549*, first published in 1913, still remains the standard history of the rising – we continue to see the tragic events of that summer through a slightly distorted lens.

In my own recent study of the rebellion, *A Murderous Midsummer*, I have attempted to readjust the focus. By pulling together the many new fragments of evidence about the rising discovered during the century since Rose-Troup laid down her pen, I have sought to reduce our reliance upon Hooker and to produce a new history of the "Great Commotion" in the west. My new account not only challenges the traditional narrative in various respects, but also suggests that the protesters posed a far more serious threat to the central regime than has generally been recognised.

In fact, the roots of the rebellion stretched back some time before the outbreak of violence recognised as the Western Rising. Already, two years earlier, a doctrinal dispute had sprung up between a traditionalist Exeter Cathedral canon, Richard Crispin, and Philip Nicolles, a young Protestant firebrand. Crispin, who in 1547 had denounced reformed theology from the pulpit, had been challenged in print by Nicolles, and soon found himself imprisoned in the Tower. For local religious conservatives, this was a clear sign of just how uncomfortable life was likely to be for them under the new, zealously Protestant regime. The resentment sparked by this affair may well have helped to pave the way for the later explosion of violence in 1549.

Cornish commotion

The ire expressed by people in the West Country at the imposition of liturgy in English was particularly virulent in Cornwall. The year before the much larger rebellion that began at Sampford Courtenay, a short-lived popular rising dubbed the "Cornish Commotion" erupted in the far west of Cornwall (for more details, see the box, right). This revolt, which was perhaps triggered by the regime's imposition of a new "order of communion" in English, reflected the fierce determination of local people to protect both traditional religious practices and Cornwall's unique cultural identity. Having killed William Body, a royal commissioner who had attempted to implement the government's religious changes in the district around Helston, the insurgents are said to have declared that: "Whosoever would defend Body, or follow such new fashions as he did, they would punish him likewise."

Though Cornwall may not (as believed by Rose-Troup) have been where the disturbances of 1549 began, the speed with which its people responded to that event demonstrates the strength of feeling there. The protests that built to become the Western Rising began in Sampford Courtenay on 10 June, spreading to Cornwall in early July. Subsequently, in the space of just three weeks, Humphrey Arundell – a gentleman from near Bodmin – managed to raise a 6,000-strong army in Cornwall and march with it to Exeter. There they joined the Devonian forces in a siege of the city that continued for five long weeks before government forces were able to regroup and drive the rebels back to Sampford Courtenay.

In other words, there was a rapid mobi-

Defender of the new faith

John Russell, 1st Earl of Bedford, drawn by Hans Holbein the Younger. Russell conclusively defeated the rebels at Sampford Courtenay on 17 August

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"We the Cornishmen utterly refuse this new English"

The Prayer Book Rebellion was an expression of cultural as well as religious defiance, explains Mark Stoyle

An intriguing point about the Western Rising is that it appears to have been partially fuelled by a desire to protect the distinctive Cornish culture. At the start of the 16th century, Cornish – a Brythonic language closely related to Welsh – was still widely spoken in western Cornwall. But the onset of the Reformation accelerated its retreat, and the reformers' determination to ensure that English, rather than Latin, became the chief language of religious instruction meant that the Cornish found themselves increasingly obliged to learn it.

In 1548, Edward VI's government directed that a new "order of communion" in English should be incorporated within the traditional Latin mass. The fact that a popular insurrection broke out in west Cornwall within days of the new order of communion being introduced seems unlikely to be coincidence. And when, a year later, the regime replaced the Latin liturgy with the Book of Common Prayer, it provoked a powerful sense of Cornish "cultural defensiveness".

St Piran's Flag, the standard of Cornwall and now a potent symbol of Cornish identity

Among the demands sent to the government by the western rebels in 1549 was one declaring that: "We will not receive the new service… we the Cornishmen (whereof certain of us understand no English) utterly refuse this new English." Tragically, the protesters' defeat helped sound the death knell for the Cornish tongue. By making an issue of the language, they had inadvertently ensured that it would be tainted, in the eyes of the ruling classes, with the stain of sedition. As a result, the Cornish were denied the liturgy in their own tongue that was later granted to the Welsh, and – English having become the language of daily worship throughout Cornwall – the Cornish language went into steep decline. Within 150 years, it had all but disappeared.

Why do the Tudors still grab us?
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lisation of and advance by large numbers of Cornishmen. This would have made the combined forces of the rebellion far more dynamic, assertive and threatening than has previously been recognised. And from the government's point of view, the rebels' movements in July 1549 must have looked far more purposeful and menacing than traditional tellings of the rising would suggest.

Conversely, the royal forces under Lord Russell's command that were initially tasked with subduing the rebels were much weaker than has previously been appreciated. It is now clear that, right up until the end of July, Russell had remained extremely short of men – and, therefore, extremely vulnerable to attack. On or around 29 July, just such an assault had seemed to be in the offing when the rebels advanced in force upon Russell's camp at Honiton, forcing him to sally out to meet them. The resulting battle fought at Fenny Bridges proved to be a crucial turning point. Russell managed first to defeat the rebel forces that had already assembled at the bridge over the Otter west of Honiton, and also to disperse a "new supply" of 800 insurgents who had hurried up to reinforce them. Specifically described as "Cornish men", these latecomers probably represented the advance guard of the main Cornish host.

It had been a desperately close thing. If Arundell had managed to bring up more of his Cornishmen to east Devon just a day or two earlier, he might well have been able to force the king's general into headlong flight. If that had happened, the inhabitants of the restive counties at Russell's back might well have joined hands with the insurgents, opening the way for the rebellion to catch fire right across the south of England and Wales – and, potentially, for the regime of the Duke of Somerset (the man who led Edward's government) to be toppled altogether. As it was, Russell himself was reinforced almost at once by the first of the mercenary soldiers for whom he had been pleading for so long, and was thus able to move onto the offensive at last.

What followed, as we've seen, was bloody defeat for the rebels on 17 August at Sampford Courtenay. Yet those protesters' aims came close to being achieved during the factional struggle that then raged in the capital.

Anger in East Anglia

The West Country was by no means the only part of the kingdom to experience serious outbreaks of disorder in 1549. Another huge popular rising, known today as Kett's Rebellion, was taking place in East Anglia at the same time as the Western Rising, and lesser "stirs" also occurred in a score of other counties. As a result, many powerful figures turned against the Duke of Somerset, believing that his policies had brought England to the brink of anarchy. In October, Somerset was brought down by an aristocratic coup in London – a coup in which Sir Thomas Arundell, a wealthy Cornish gentleman and cousin of the rebel Humphrey Arundell, played a leading role.

For several months, it was then widely believed that a clique of religious conservatives resistant to the Reformation were on the point of taking power. They would make Edward's adult half-sister, Mary – a devoted Catholic – the young king's "governor", halting the drive towards Protestantism. For Humphrey Arundell and the other captured rebel leaders, by now imprisoned in the Tower, it was a moment pregnant with hope.

Alas for them, the moment passed all too soon. Sir Thomas Arundell and his conservative allies were outfoxed by John Dudley, Earl of Warwick, who seized power and set up a regime even more strongly Protestant than the one that had been led by Somerset. In January 1550, Humphrey Arundell and the other rebel captains in the Tower were hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn, thus bringing the bloody story of the Western Rising to an end.

Final destination
The inconspicuous round stone marking the location of the Tyburn Tree, the notorious gallows in London where rebel leaders were hanged, drawn and quartered in January 1550

The rebels' courage and determination was remembered with pride by their children and grandchildren

Yet this remarkable episode was never forgotten by those who had lived through it. Lord Grey, one of the royal commanders, subsequently remarked of the rebels that "such was the valour and stoutness of these men… that he never, in all the wars he had been in, did know the like". Another loyalist similarly marvelled at the courage shown by the protesters in the face of Russell's mercenaries, later recalling that "the archers of the rebels did so behave themselves with their volleys of arrows against divers… bands [of]… Arquebusiers, Italians and Spaniards, that they drove them from… banks, ditches, hedges and other advantages of ground, to the great mischief of many of those strangers."

Few of those who had taken part in the rising ever dared to speak of it openly afterwards, for fear of harsh punishment. But at least one piece of evidence shows that the rebels' courage and determination was remembered with pride by their children and grandchildren. In the early 17th century, the Devonian antiquarian Thomas Westcote wrote of the events of the Western Rising that, if he should record what was still commonly said by the local people about "the strength, and force and resolution of these commons (the archers especially), you might, peradventure, take it with some doubt lest it increased somewhat by time or penning".

The protesters may have gone down to bloody defeat – but their martial exploits lived long in the memories of their descendants. H

Mark Stoyle is professor of history at Southampton University. His new book, *A Murderous Midsummer: The Western Rising of 1549*, is published by Yale University Press

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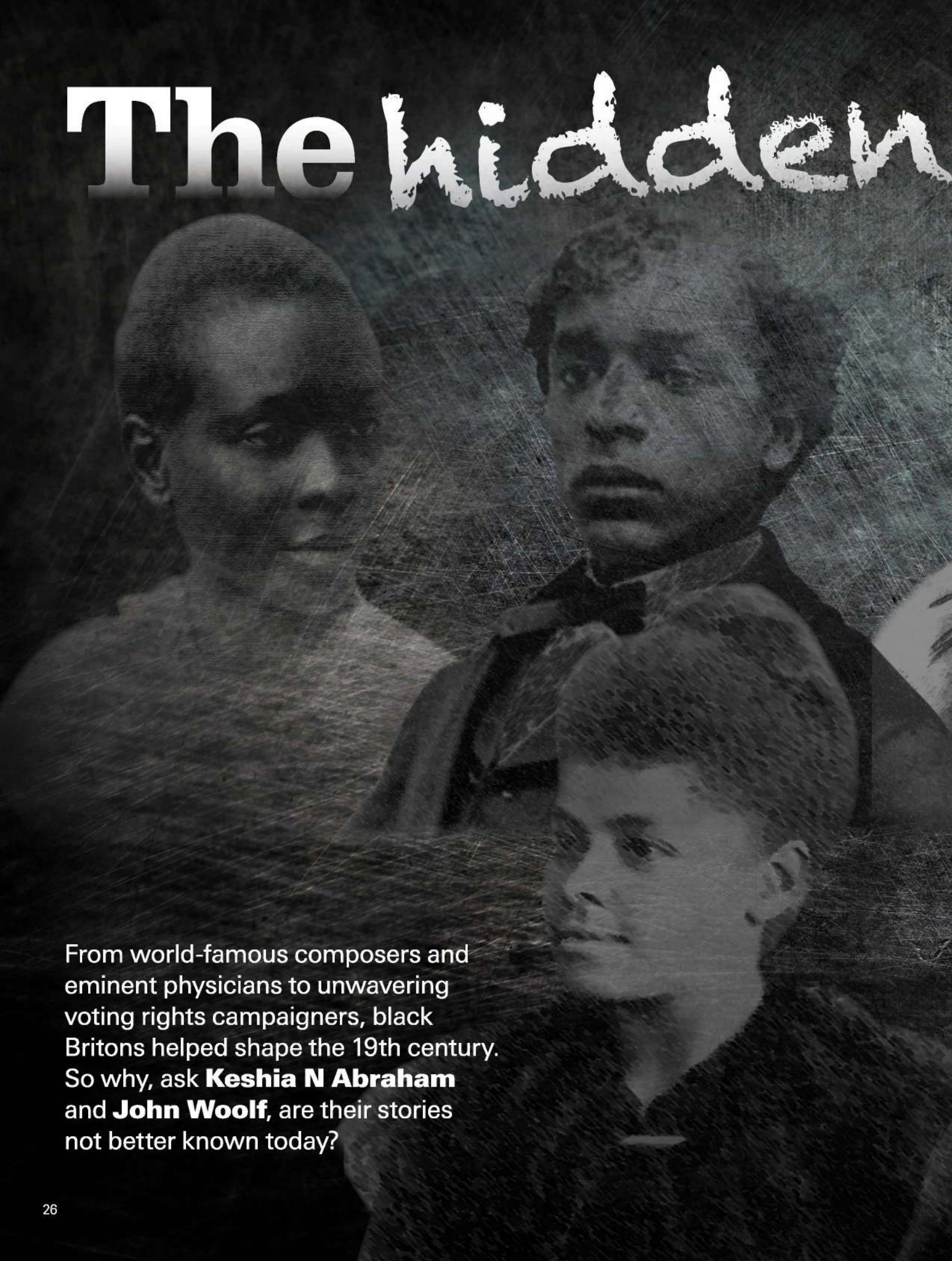
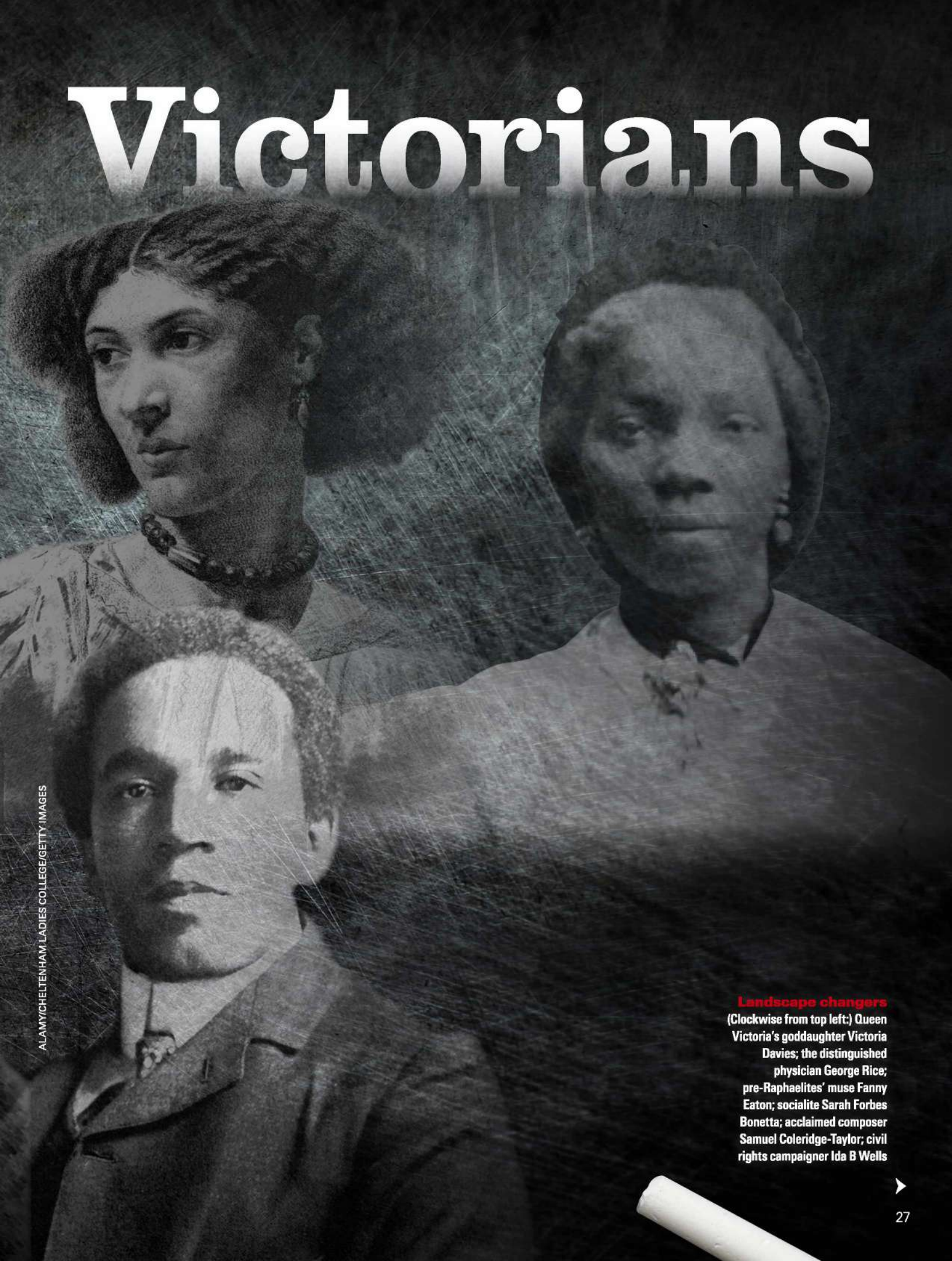
The hidden



From world-famous composers and eminent physicians to unwavering voting rights campaigners, black Britons helped shape the 19th century. So why, ask **Keshia N Abraham** and **John Woolf**, are their stories not better known today?

Victorians



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Landscape changers
(Clockwise from top left:) Queen Victoria's goddaughter Victoria Davies; the distinguished physician George Rice; pre-Raphaelites' muse Fanny Eaton; socialite Sarah Forbes Bonetta; acclaimed composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor; civil rights campaigner Ida B Wells

George Bridgetower
Violinist whose brilliance dazzled Beethoven

William Cuffay
Campaigned for working-class voting rights

Fanny Eaton
Made her name as a muse for the pre-Raphaelites

Walter Tull
Footballer who was killed on the western front

In the spring of 1803, at a concert hall in Vienna, Ludwig van Beethoven performed *Violin Sonata No 9* alongside the young virtuoso ***George Bridgetower*** 1, to whom the piece was dedicated. The composer played the piano, and the so-called "African Prince", whose father was possibly from Barbados, played the violin. Beethoven was so moved by the performance that, in the midst of the piece, he leapt from his seat and shouted: "Once more, my dear fellow!"

But by the time the sonata was published, the dedication had changed. Bridgetower was replaced by French violinist Rodolphe Kreutzer. The reasons why are hazy, but the result was erasure – and it marked a broader pattern.

In January 1826, a starry-eyed, 16-year-old medical student, Charles Darwin, engaged the formerly enslaved ***John Edmonstone*** 2 to teach him the art of preserving birds at Edinburgh University. Every day for two months, for a fee of one guinea an hour and totalling more than 40 hours, Edmonstone relayed the latest techniques. Darwin went on to directly apply Edmonstone's teachings during the voyage of HMS *Beagle* (1831–36), where he preserved a mockingbird collection from the Galapagos. This became the raw material that informed his theory of evolution. It owed a debt to Edmonstone – now largely forgotten.

In our book, *Black Victorians: Hidden in History*, we show that there were many people of African descent living, working and marrying in Victorian Britain. They were not just onlookers. They were active and embedded participants who moulded the Victorian landscape.

This is not a novel point. A litany of largely black historians – from the Victorian era to the present day – have discussed, documented and analysed the black British presence in the 19th century. But the statement that there were black Victorians helping to build Great Britain hasn't properly landed in Victorian studies.

This is a strange state of affairs. Since at least the first century AD, Britain's population included people from north Africa. There were people of African descent in the courts and societies of Henry VII, Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, as brilliantly documented by Onyeka Nubia and Miranda Kaufmann. As the English (and, later, British) colonised lands and enslaved fellow human beings, more people of African descent came to Britain.

Questions of ethnicity

By the 18th century, there were thousands of people of African descent living and working in Britain (as well as Asians and Native Americans). It has been estimated that, by the late 18th century, there were 10,000–20,000 black people living in England. They married and had children, who did the same, assimilating into British society.

But the first national census in 1801 was mute on questions of ethnicity (in fact, ethnicity wasn't mentioned in the census until 1991). What's more, in undertaking genealogical research, you soon learn that the location in which someone was born doesn't necessarily indicate ethnicity. There's also the fact that women mostly altered their names upon marriage, the enslaved were cruelly given the names of their captors, and contemporary descriptions such as "dark" could be applied to white as well as black Victorians.

So, archival obfuscation might partly account for the relative historiographical oversight. Ignorance, disinterest, neglect and racism are other explanations as well. Black Victorian assimilation is another. Yet local studies have revealed that black people were relatively common in densely populated areas such as London, Liverpool, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Kent, and in our book we explore individuals active across British society – everyone from ***William Cuffay*** 3, the Chartist leader who campaigned for political rights for the working classes, to ***Fanny Eaton*** 4, the domestic worker and Pre-Raphaelite muse.

We mined an array of archives to prove the point: in Haringey, London, there are photographs of the black footballer ***Walter Tull*** 5, who played for Tottenham Hotspur and Northampton Town, and the nurses ***Sister Freda*** 6 – (pictured, right) who worked at Tottenham Hospital – and ***Asarto Ward*** 7. At Waltham Forest, there are stories of Madagascan Christian refugees; at the Museum of Croydon, materials on the black British composer ***Samuel Coleridge-Taylor*** 8; at the Lambeth Palace Library, the letters of the black bishop ***Samuel Crowther*** 9. The Black Cultural Archives in London is also an invaluable resource.

The digitisation of archives has helped resurrect silenced voices. Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, whose

Flying lessons An artist's impression of John Edmonstone teaching Charles Darwin how to preserve birds, a skill that would prove critical to the development of the theory of evolution

They were not just onlookers. They were active participants who moulded the Victorian landscape

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PG 39 - IMAGE COURTESY OF SUTTON ARCHIVES. REF 39/23./BRUCE CASTLE MUSEUM (HARINGEY ARCHIVE AND MUSEUM SERVICE)/GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

'Hiawatha's Wedding Feast' made him world-famous in 1898, gave interviews to *The Musical Times* where he forcibly asserted: "It has been stated again and again that I was born in the West Indies. This is not the case. I was born in London."

The National Archives have made accessible the state trial reports of William Cuffay who, when charged in 1848 with intending to "levy war against the queen", defiantly addressed the Old Bailey: "I know my cause is good, and I have a self-approving conscience that will bear me up against anything, and that would bear me up even to the scaffold; therefore I think I can endure any punishment proudly. I feel no disgrace at being called a felon." Cuffay, born and raised in Kent, was sentenced to transportation to Tasmania for life.

Racism for the masses

Scratch the surface of the era, then, and black Victorians become visible and perceptively active in areas ranging from politics to art, sports to entertainment, theology to law and the menial and skilled trades.

This was at a time when the notion of "race" was assuming even greater importance. In scientific circles, the advancing theory of polygenism stated that humanity was divided into separate groups with inherited, biological differences (and white was deemed superior to black). Meanwhile, an expanding empire brutally subjugated people across the globe, and despite the abolition of slavery within that empire, Britain still relied on the cotton picked by the enslaved. Back home, the entertainment industry was taking racism to the masses, notably in the form of "human zoos" and blackface minstrelsy. (It was partly due to this racist form of entertainment that the acclaimed black actor ***Ira Aldridge*** 10 was vilified for "defiling" Shakespeare's *Othello* in the 19th century.)

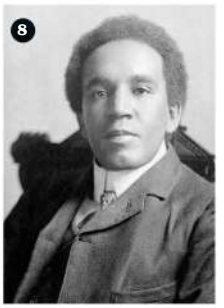
It was in this context that black Victorians both triumphed and struggled across the social scale. Social investigator Henry Mayhew recorded a number of black Victorians living on the margins. One such man, who was labelled a "Negro Beggar", had travelled from America to Britain having heard that in Britain "whites did not look down on them [black people] and ill-treat them, as they do in New York". Yet the "Negro Beggar" (Mayhew never gives us his name) struggled to find work and when he tried to get employment on English ships, "they won't have me", he told Mayhew.

Denied a lowly job on the ships, the "Negro Beggar" was also denied access to public establishments. ("At some places they don't care to take a man of colour in," he said). He was also subject to racist taunts: "The butchers call me Othello, and ask me why I killed my wife."

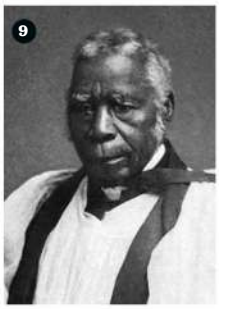
Mayhew labelled another black Victorian, Edward Albert, "The negro crossing-sweeper, who had lost both his legs". Albert told Mayhew: "I was a little boy when the slaves in Jamaica got their freedom." Aged nine, Albert joined the Royal Navy as a cabin boy, before working his way up to head cook. It was on one voyage that he suffered frostbite to his legs: "After my limbs became affected, the master of the vessel, and mate, took me to the ship's oven, in order… to cure me; my feet … were put into the oven;

Care in the community Sister Freda (back row) with hospital staff in c1910–20. "Scratch the surface and black Victorians become visible in areas ranging from politics to art, sports to entertainment, theology to law and the menial and skilled trades"

Asarto Ward
Worked as a nurse in London before moving to Sierra Leone



Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
Won acclaim for his choral work 'Hiawatha's Wedding Feast'



Samuel Crowther
Was ordained as the first African bishop of the Anglican church

Ira Aldridge
His Shakespearean performances won over sceptical critics

Pablo Fanque
This equestrian performer set up his own circus

Dr George Rice
Became a leading medical director after working under Joseph Lister

Thomas Birch Freeman
Worked as a British Methodist missionary in west Africa

Change of fortunes Sarah Forbes Bonetta with her husband, James Pinson Labulo Davies, a polymath from Sierra Leone. As a child, Bonetta was orphaned and enslaved before being taken to Britain. Her daughter, Victoria, would later become goddaughter to the queen

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

How did black Victorians make their voices heard? John Woolf will be discussing the marginalisation of black people on our podcast: *historyextra.com/podcast*

in consequence of the treatment, my feet burst through the intense swelling, and mortification ensued…"

Albert was subsequently abandoned by the vessel, but he was determined to seek justice, telling Mayhew: "I will never leave England or Scotland until I get my rights." He wrote a memoir, *Brief Sketch of the Life of Edward Albert or the Dead Man Come to Life Again*, which outlined his brutal treatment and asserted his hitherto denied rights. What ultimately happened to Albert, we do not know.

Elsewhere, another black Victorian was telling his story from the social margins, deep inside a Victorian mental asylum. Joseph Peters (c1843–83), a seaman born in present-day Liberia, wrote to the medical superintendent: "I should like you to release me that I may go to my own people." Peters passionately retold his biography, which included the death of his father when he was a child, the poverty he and his mother experienced, and his life as a seaman traversing the globe: "Hoping you will give me my liberty," he concluded in his letter. Peters never did get his freedom: he died six years later and was buried in the asylum cemetery in 1883.

Pablo Fanque [11] was born into a workhouse in Norwich but escaped by joining the circus. In 1841, after perfecting the art of acrobatics and equestrianism, he started his own group, winning praise for his respectable circus and posthumously finding immortalisation in the Beatles song, 'Being for the Benefit of Mr Kite!' (In which, inspired by an 1843 poster promoting one of Fanque's circuses, John Lennon sings: "The Hendersons will all be there; Late of Pablo Fanque's fair, what a scene.")

Life on the margins

At the other end of the social scale, there were people like the Jamaican millionaire George Stiebel – whose father was probably Sigismund Stiebel, a German merchant living in London – and Nathaniel Wells, a black country gentleman who inherited a fortune from his slave-owning father and lived a life of respectability in Wales. He served as sheriff of Monmouthshire in 1818, and was also an investor, warden to his local church and a proficient artist.

Meanwhile, a host of west African elites trained, studied and traded in Britain while others, such as ***Sarah Forbes Bonetta*** [12], were connected to royalty. Born in what is now Nigeria, and orphaned at an early age, Bonetta became a renowned presence within the upper echelons of Victorian society having been introduced to Queen Victoria in 1850. The queen took an instant liking to Bonetta and agreed to support her. In 1862, Bonetta married ***James Pinson Labulo Davies*** [13], a Yoruba polymath from Sierra Leone. They had three children – one of whom, Victoria, became goddaughter to the queen.

There were, naturally, black Victorians among the burgeoning middle classes – like ***Dr George Rice*** [14], a renowned medical director, and ***Thomas Birch Freeman*** [15], who was born in Britain and moved to west Africa as a Methodist missionary. Africans and Asians came to Britain from the ever-growing empire as interracial couples cohabited, married and had children. Migration was always part of Britain's story.

Indeed, throughout the Victorian era, a host of black Americans travelled to Britain to denounce slavery. Black abolitionists such as ***Frederick Douglass*** [16], William Wells Brown, Ellen Craft and William Craft addressed thousands of people on the topics of slavery, temperance and suffrage, building and strengthening an African American tradition that sought to inflame popular opinion against American slavery. Douglass later recalled that on his visit to Britain in the 1840s, he felt a sense of freedom: "I breathe and lo! The chattel becomes a man."

Another abolitionist speaker, ***Sarah Parker Remond*** [17], travelled to Britain in 1858 and denounced "American despotism" in a series of highly praised lectures. She also reminded her British audiences: "When I walk through the streets of Manchester, and meet load after load of cotton, I think of those 80,000 cotton plantations on which was grown the $125m worth of cotton which supply your market, and I remember that not 1 cent of that money has ever reached the hands of the labourers."

Her rhetoric developed into a black feminist, anti-racist discourse, fuelled by the likes of ***Ida B Wells*** [18] in Britain. Educator, editor, feminist and activist, Wells crossed the Atlantic in the 1890s, having been invited by the writers Isabelle Mayo and Catherine Impey (founder of the anti-racist journal *Anti-Caste: Devoted to the Interests of Coloured Race*). Wells denounced lynching and segregation in America, aiming to "give the world the black people's side of the story", as she stated in 1894.

By the century's end, despite the hardening of racial attitudes, there were powerful countervailing forces. Pan-Africanism found notable expression in the First Pan-African Conference in London, 1900, which affirmed in its worldwide address: "Let the nations of the world respect the integrity and independence of the free Negro states of Abyssinia, Liberia, Haiti, and the rest, and let the inhabitants of these states, the independent tribes of Africa, the Negroes of the West Indies and America, and the black subjects of all nations… fight bravely, that they may prove… their incontestable right to be counted among the great brotherhood of mankind."

Appreciating the presence of black Victorians today makes their incontestable right to be counted among the brotherhood and sisterhood of mankind indelible to the Victorian world. They cannot be unseen. H

Keshia N Abraham and **John Woolf** are historians and authors. Their new book, *Black Victorians: Hidden in History*, was published by Duckworth Books in September

A host of west African elites trained, studied and traded in Britain, while others were connected to royalty

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

Lolita Chakrabarti nominated actor **Ira Aldridge** for an episode of BBC Radio 4's **Great Lives**. Listen here: *bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m0016ppy*

16

Frederick Douglass
Highlighted the cruelty of American slavery on a visit to Britain

17

Sarah Parker Remond
Travelled to Britain to drum up support for the abolitionist cause

18

Ida B Wells
Denounced lynching and segregation in her native America

FIGHTIN DIRTY

Faking retreats, attacking enemies in their sleep or even playing dead – medieval soldiers were prepared to do it all. **James Titterton** reveals five deceptive tactics that armies employed to come up trumps on the battlefield

ILLUSTRATIONS BY **LAURIE AVON**

1 Play dead, and always keep a rotting chicken handy

Military leaders pulled off some outrageous stunts to outfox their enemies in the Middle Ages. But the one that the Norman leader Bohemond of Taranto deployed at the beginning of the 12th century – pretending he was dead – surely takes some beating. When crusading armies from western Europe conquered the city of Antioch (modern-day Antakya, Turkey) in 1098, Bohemond decided to settle there and declared himself prince of Antioch. By September 1104, however, this new "crusader state" was in trouble. Not only was it surrounded by hostile Muslim city states, but it was threatened by Alexios Komnenos, the Byzantine emperor, who believed the city was rightfully his. Bohemond decided that he must return to his lands in Italy to raise reinforcements.

According to Alexios's daughter, Anna

How bloody was medieval life?
Read Hannah Skoda's feature on medieval attitudes to brutality at: *historyextra.com/medieval-violence*

G

Komnene (who also happened to be a historian), in order to avoid being captured by the Greeks, Bohemond spread rumours that he had died. His men carried him onto a ship inside a coffin, and, to add to the illusion, he kept a dead cockerel with him to simulate the smell of rotting flesh. Whenever the ship was in sight of land, the crew would wail and lament as if mourning for their prince; otherwise Bohemond would get out of the coffin and walk about. Using this ruse, he successfully evaded the Greeks.

Anna seems to have admired his courage and ingenuity, calling this trick "not very dignified, but amazingly crafty". While she is our only source for this incident, so the whole thing may actually be an invention, there are striking parallels to similar stories found in other texts. Bohemond's father, Robert Guiscard, was alleged to have captured a town in Calabria, in southern Italy, by pretending that he was bringing one of his men to be buried in the local monastery. Another chronicler says the same tactic was used by Bohemond's brother to capture Monte Cassino to the north.

2 Pretend to run away... then attack

William, Duke of Normandy, is best known for his dispute with Harold Godwinson, a disagreement that would lead to his victory over his Anglo-Saxon rival at the battle of Hastings. Yet this was not the first time that William (future William I, king of England) had fallen out with a fellow ruler.

In 1052, King Henry I of France formed an alliance with Geoffrey, Count of Anjou, to make war upon England's future conqueror. Even William's own uncle, the Count of Arques, joined the alliance. Upon hearing this, William swiftly laid siege to his uncle's castle just outside Dieppe.

That August, Henry advanced with an army to relieve Arques. When the Normans learned the king was close, they decided to lay a trap. While most of the knights hid themselves in ambush, a small group went out and, when the French spotted them, pretended to run away. The French soldiers hoped to capture the Normans and so pursued them right into the ambush. A Norman chronicle describes what happened next: "And suddenly, when they had turned back, those who had been seen to flee began to strike fiercely at them to such a degree that, in that fight, Enguerrand, Count of Abbeville, was killed, run through, together with many men, and Hugh, known as Bardulf, was captured with many others."

This appears to have been a popular ploy since it was reported in many different medieval sources. Famously, 14 years after his victory at Arques, William would use the ruse at Hastings to lure the English off their defensive position on Senlac Hill. Accounts of the battle disagree as to whether this was, at first, a real flight caused by a rumour that William had been killed, or if the whole thing was just a series of ruses, but the highly trained Norman knights were certainly capable of performing such a manoeuvre.

3 Strike when the enemy's sleeping

In January 1300, Philip IV of France invaded Flanders, imprisoned its ruler, Count Guy of Dampierre, and annexed the county to the crown. But by May 1302, disputes over taxation and the oppressive behaviour of the royal governor, James of Châtillon, had provoked rioting in the city of Bruges. On 17 May, Châtillon entered the city with an army to receive the submission of the government, but at dawn the next day, supporters of Count Guy entered Bruges themselves and massacred the French in their beds. The Flemings went from house to house, identifying their targets by making everybody say the word "scilt" (shield), which the French could not pronounce properly. Hundreds were killed as a result and Châtillon was forced to flee. He had to leave all of his possessions behind.

A Flemish chronicler of this period reported that "the French said their men were treacherously defeated and killed" in this attack, but insisted that the French themselves were to blame, for they had "entered a poorly fortified town with little caution or prudence, with so many of their deadly enemies at hand". Here, it is possible to see how two different sides could regard the same incident in totally different ways. From the French perspective, the Flemings were subjects of the French king and by attacking his representative, they were rebelling against the crown and so committing an act of treachery. From the Flemish perspective, they were patriots in support of their true lord, Count Guy of Dampierre, and were justified in attacking their enemies, even while they slept, and it was up to the French to defend themselves.

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4 Don a disguise before storming the battlefield

One of the most distinctive aspects of medieval warfare was heraldry: a system of specific colours and symbols, displayed on the shield and other equipment. These "coats of arms", or simply "arms", each one unique to a particular family, helped to distinguish one armoured nobleman from another at tournaments or on the battlefield. It was a display of pride and status, but it came at a cost. Enemies could identify an individual as a potential to be captured and ransomed after the fighting, or they could simply be killed.

To avoid this, some commanders dressed their bodyguards in copies of their coat of arms. At the battle of Shrewsbury (21 July 1403), Henry IV of England had at least two such doubles, who ended up being killed by Archibald, Earl of Douglas. William Shakespeare famously portrayed this ruse in *Henry IV, Part 1.* On being informed that "the king hath many marching in his coats", Douglas exclaims: "Now, by my sword, I will kill all his coats; I'll murder all his wardrobe, piece by piece, until I meet the king."

Another, much riskier, trick was to enter the battle without a coat of arms at all. While this effectively rendered the individual anonymous, it could lead to them being killed out of hand, rather than spared for ransom. The French knight Anthony, Duke of Brabant, arriving late to the battle of Agincourt in 1415, entered the fighting wearing another man's armour and a makeshift coat. His secretary, Edmund of Dynter, who wrote an account of the battle, reported that the duke's body was later found away from the fighting, wounded in the head and neck, as if someone had removed his helmet. Edmund claimed that the English did not recognise him without his proper coat, or else they would have kept him alive as a valuable captive.

5 Make agreements with your fingers crossed

Medieval society placed great significance on oaths and sacred promises, which were often made in the presence of holy objects such as the Bible or a saint's relic. Furthermore, noble culture placed a high value on honour and keeping one's word. Yet this backdrop did not prevent desperate or unscrupulous commanders breaking their promises in order to gain a military advantage in a difficult situation.

In July 1174, Henry II of England faced an alliance of his three greatest enemies: Louis VII of France, Philip I of Flanders and his own eldest son, Henry, the so-called "Young King". The three had joined together to attack Rouen, the capital of Normandy and one of Henry's strongholds on the continent. After 19 days of continuous fighting, Louis offered the defenders a day's truce in honour of the Feast of St Lawrence (10 August), and they agreed.

According to the English chronicler William of Newburgh, however, the other nobles persuaded Louis to break the truce and launch a sneak attack. An assault party was organised in whispers and approached the city walls with ladders, only to be spotted by a priest who happened to look out of the window of a church tower. The alarm was raised, and the defenders were able to repel the assault. William of Newburgh claimed that Louis subsequently tried to blame Philip for breaking the truce: "The king poured the blame back onto the Count of Flanders, but nevertheless the stain of such a disgraceful transgression stuck more to the king's character."

William is our only source for this event and, as an Englishman, was inclined to believe the worst of the French king, so it may be that he was reporting unflattering gossip or invented the story for dramatic effect. Nevertheless, it tells us about the kind of deception that was considered abhorrent in medieval warfare. Ambushes, disguises and night attacks might all be understood as acceptable, if not admirable displays of cunning. But to break one's word, even to an enemy, was a step too far. H

James Titterton is a researcher at the University of Leeds. His book *Deception in Medieval Warfare* was published by the Boydell Press earlier this year

DIVIDED

HERZEGOVINE
BULGARIE
BOSNIE
DALMATIE
MONTENEGRO
TURQUIE

ALAMY

Land grab
A French cartoon from 1908 shows Ferdinand I of Bulgaria declaring independence (centre) and Franz Joseph I of Austria-Hungary seizing Bosnia and Herzegovina from a forlorn-looking Ottoman sultan, Abdülhamid II. The Ottoman empire would be swept away by a surge of nationalism

THEY FELL

A century after the Ottoman empire came to an end, **Ryan Gingeras** chronicles the rising tide of sectarianism that drove this once mighty imperium into extinction

Mehmed VI, the last sultan of the Ottoman empire, died suddenly on the night of 16 May 1926. His passing occurred as he entered his fourth year of exile, in the Italian resort town of San Remo. Mehmed VI departed life virtually penniless. His debts were so substantial that Italian authorities confiscated his coffin until local accounts were settled. The sultan's surviving relatives eventually bore his body to Syria where he was interred on the grounds of an Ottoman mosque in central Damascus.

Accompanying Mehmed on his final voyage was his son-in-law Ömer Faruk, who reflected at length as they sailed across the Mediterranean. Their ship, he noted, was slowly passing many of the lands their family had reigned over for centuries. Not only was their empire now gone, the Ottoman name inspired little loyalty or affection. "Our unfortunate sovereigns were blind," Ömer wrote to his wife. "They did not try to understand their people, nor the spirit of the people. What our rulers did, they did to themselves as well as to the people of their country!"

Mehmed VI's final journey across the Mediterranean was barely noticed in the world's great capitals. But it marked a mournful postscript to one of world history's mightiest and most durable empires. For centuries following its establishment in 1299, the Ottomans had controlled territory across the Balkans, north Africa and the Middle East. From their capital in what is now Istanbul, they presided over a truly massive imperium that, at its height in the 16th century, would stretch from Egypt in the south, modern-day Iraq in the east through north Africa to Algeria and on to modern-day Romania and Hungary in the north. By the early 1500s, Mehmed's predecessors ruled not only as emperors, but as caliphs of the world's Muslims. For hundreds of years, clerics throughout the Islamic world offered prayers for the Ottoman caliph during each and every Friday sermon.

In the autumn of 1922, however, the final sultan/caliph, Mehmed VI, was unseated. Of the 140 parliamentarians who assembled to vote the Ottoman monarchy out of existence on 1 November that year, only two rejected the motion to declare the sultan's empire dissolved and dead. After years of insurrection and nationalist dissent, few appeared to lament its departing. In its decision to eject Mehmed, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey condemned the Ottoman royal family for presiding over a "system of autocracy", one rooted in "ignorance and debauchery".

The damage inflicted was staggering. War and insurrection left up to 5 million refugees displaced in the Ottoman lands

Final departure Sultan Mehmed VI leaves the Dolmabahçe Palace, in Constantinople (now Istanbul), by the back door in 1922. A few days later, as the Ottoman empire ended, a British warship would take him into exile

ALAMY

So what had gone wrong? How had an empire that exerted so much power – and for so long – been brought to its knees? When chronicling the causes of its collapse, many historians have focused on the empire's long decline, its metamorphosis into the "sick man of Europe", a period of decay that culminated in the catastrophe of defeat in the First World War. The calamity of 1918, some have argued, was the event that delivered the final blow.

Yet there's more to the story than that. It's undeniable that the empire's final decades set the conditions for its collapse. But they didn't render its demise inevitable. It was what happened between 1918 and 1922 – interventions by Greek, British and French forces, and, above all, soaring tensions between the region's Muslim and non-Muslim population – that truly condemned the empire to its fate.

Perpetual conflict

When Mehmed VI was born in 1861, there was little denying the difficulties confronting the Ottoman empire. Most of its citizens would have hardly known a decade of peace. In the late 1870s, the Ottomans were defeated in war by their great imperial rival, Russia. Worse still, in 1912 the states of Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Greece attacked the Ottoman empire, sparking the First Balkan War. Defeat in this conflict led to the loss of most of its remaining Balkan territory.

The damage inflicted by these crises was staggering. Modern studies suggest war and insurrection left up to 5 million refugees displaced in the Ottoman lands between the end of the 18th century and the First World War. For those who lived at a safer distance from the empire's borders, high taxes, conscription, economic upheaval and crime exacted no less a terrible cost.

By the time Mehmed became sultan in the summer of 1918, the empire had abandoned all of north Africa. The years leading up to Mehmed's accession to the throne also witnessed immense political turbulence. After decades of autocratic rule by Mehmed VI's brother, Abdülhamid II, officers in the imperial army rose up in the summer of 1908 demanding the restoration of the constitution and its elected assembly.

The Young Turk Revolution, as this uprising came to be remembered, saw rule shift into the hands of a political party known as the Committee of Union and Progress (or CUP). The "Young Turks" of the CUP advanced the belief that Muslims alone embodied the true spirit at the heart of the Ottoman nation. This new emphasis on the distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims would play a critical role in the empire's downfall.

In the months leading up to the First World War, the CUP imposed dictatorial rule

Empire in retreat: the greater Middle East in c1914 and c1923

BATTLEFIELD MAPS/ALAMY

Walking into trouble Turkish men mobilise for conflict in 1914. Defeat in the First World War four years later dealt the Ottomans a grievous blow but, argues Ryan Gingeras, it didn't render the empire's collapse an inevitability

GETTY IMAGES

Untold suffering An Armenian mother and her children flee their home following the murder of their husband and father by Ottoman forces in 1899. Sectarian tensions escalated over the following years and, in 1915, the Young Turk government deported hundreds of thousands of Armenians and forced many of them south into the Syrian desert. By 1917, an estimated 1 million Armenians had died

over the state and expelled hundreds of thousands from the native Greek population of Anatolia (the land peninsula that is today the Asian portion of Turkey) from their homes. Forcibly removing these "internal tumors", as one Young Turk official put it, became a hallmark of the CUP's rule, rendering deep divisions in Ottoman society.

Brutal reversals

Despite this, Ottoman citizens went to war in 1914 enthusiastically. Seeing an opportunity to align themselves with Europe's most powerful army, Ottoman leaders sided with Germany and the Central Powers in the conflict. The fighting, however, proved brutal and disappointing from the start. Ottoman armies went on the offensive against Russia and Britain in the winter of 1915, only to be driven back with heavy losses.

These early defeats on the battlefield stoked the paranoia of senior leaders who suspected that the empire's non-Muslims could no longer be trusted as loyal citizens. Central to their suspicions were Armenians, the bulk of whom lived in regions bordering the empire's historic adversary, Russia. Beginning in the spring of 1915, government officials banished hundreds of thousands of Armenians from their native villages and towns, sending the majority of them south into the deserts of northern Syria and Mesopotamia. An untold number, primarily men, were executed amid their removal, while many more, particularly women and children, died from hunger and exposure. "Military considerations alone," as one Ottoman minister put it, did not prompt the deliberate mass killing of Armenians. The war instead provided the Young Turk government an opportunity "to thoroughly sweep up internal enemies, the native Christians, without being disturbed by foreign diplomatic intervention".

Sign of divisions
A flag of the Young Turks movement, c1908. Their rise to power that year triggered a period of rising hostility to the Ottoman empire's non-Muslim peoples

As one official put it, the war enabled the Young Turks to "sweep up internal enemies, the native Christians"

But that war would end in defeat. Following the surrender of Bulgaria (which had also fought on the side of the Central Powers), and the loss of much of what is today Syria, leaders in Constantinople agreed to an armistice with the Allies on 31 October 1918. By now, both soldiers and civilians of the empire had experienced immense levels of suffering. Deaths at the front, coupled with the mass expulsion of Armenians and others, emptied vast swathes of the Ottoman countryside.

In laying out his conditions for peace, American president Woodrow Wilson promised the "Turkish portion" of the Ottoman empire its "assured sovereignty" while "other nationalities" would be granted "undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development".

Wilson's peace plan heartened Arab nationalists and Armenian survivors. For others in the empire, confusion and fear reigned. These tensions erupted when Greek troops seized the port city of Smyrna (or Izmir), on the west coast of Anatolia in May 1919. The Greek offensive came hard upon indications that Athens, along with Britain, France and Italy, planned to carve up the sultan's lands once peace talks in Versailles had concluded.

The arrival of Allied troops to the capital, Constantinople, in November 1918, coupled with the fall of Smyrna in May 1919, fractured Ottoman society along sectarian lines. Opinions among non-Muslims varied between caution and outright support for the Allies. Many Muslims, however, denounced Greece's

TOPFOTO/GETTY IMAGES/ALAMY

TIMELINE **An empire's final throes**

July 1908
Following decades of autocratic rule by Sultan Abdülhamid II, **the Young Turk Revolution erupts**. It leads to the restoration of the Ottoman constitution and the reopening of the imperial parliament.

October 1912–May 1913
The states of Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Greece attack the Ottoman empire, leading to the **First Balkan War**. The conflict results in the loss of most of the empire's remaining Balkan territory.

August 1914
The Ottoman empire agrees to a defence pact with Germany, resulting in its **entrance into the First World War.**

February 1915 –January 1916
The Gallipoli campaign. After months of bloody trench warfare, Ottoman troops force Allied soldiers to withdraw from the Aegean coast.

The Young Turk revolution forced Abdülhamid II into sweeping reforms

German propaganda marks the pact between Kaiser Wilhelm II, Mehmed V and Franz Joseph I

Turkish artillery in action during the Gallipoli campaign, 1915

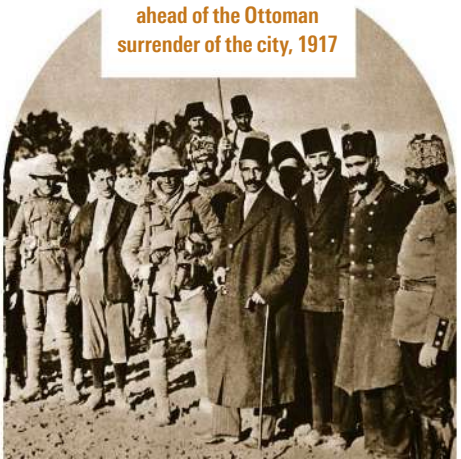
Mass migration Greek refugees flee the city of Smyrna (Izmir), western Anatolia. Turkish Nationalists' post-1918 war with Britain, France and Greece led to population exchanges of hundreds of thousands of people

April 1915
The **deportation and massacres of Ottoman Armenians** begins.

Armenians forced out of their ancestral homes by Ottoman authorities

December 1917
British troops seize Jerusalem from Ottoman forces.

The mayor of Jerusalem meets British troops ahead of the Ottoman surrender of the city, 1917



July 1918
Mehmed VI becomes sultan. Four months later, the Ottomans agree to an **armistice with Allied forces.**

May 1919
Greek troops occupy the city of Smyrna (Izmir), leading to renewed fighting in Anatolia.

Greek troops land in Smyrna and seize the city, May 1919

TOPFOTO/GETTY IMAGES

attack while thousands rallied to army units aiming to end any hope of an Allied occupation. Leading this armed struggle was a figure who would go on to dominate Turkish politics until his death two decades later. That man was Mustafa Kemal.

Kemal had ended the First World War as a senior commander in the imperial army. In opposing the Allies (now dominated by Greek, British and French forces) once again, he declared that his principal goal was restoring the sovereignty of the empire. However, his National Forces, as he called them, limited their aims to the liberation of only those Ottoman territories where a "Turkish and Muslim" majority prevailed. For Kemal and other Nationalist leaders, re-establishing imperial rule over Arab territories like Syria proved neither practical nor preferable. Recent events, Kemal believed, proved that Turkish-speaking Muslims alone composed the historic and political core of the Ottoman nation. Relinquishing the Levant and Mesopotamia appeared to assure the survival of a coherent and viable state grounded in Anatolia.

As he waged his war against the Allied powers, Kemal also declared that it was his intention to save the sultanate. However, this aim was undermined by Sultan Mehmed VI's positioning towards the enemy. While Kemal strained every sinew to eject French and British troops from Anatolia, the sultan feared the National Forces would bring about the return of the violence and ruination associated with the CUP. The National Force's early successes did little to dissuade Mehmed VI from negotiating directly with the Allies. In August 1920, the sultan consented to sign the Treaty of Sèvres, which allowed the Allies significant territorial concessions in Anatolia.

Mehmed's surrender, coupled with his efforts to suppress the National Forces, was received as an act of treason by large numbers of loyal citizens – and set in train a series of events that would bring his reign to an end. Soon after the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres, a new parliament calling itself the Grand National Assembly passed a revised constitution. In addition to declaring Turkey the country's new name, the constitution stripped the sultan of all his sovereign powers. Politics prevented Kemal and the National Assembly from challenging Mehmed VI outright. But his stay of execution would be but a brief one.

Coming man Mustafa Kemal, pictured in c1920. His crusade to eject French and British forces from Anatolia set him on a collision course with Sultan Mehmed VI

Kemal limited his aims to liberating only those Ottoman territories where "a Turkish and Muslim majority prevailed"

Violent reprisals

The Nationalist war against the Allies reached a climax in the autumn of 1922 with a bloody, chaotic victory for Kemal's forces. During their retreat from Anatolia, Greek troops left much of the countryside in ruin. Nationalist troops retaliated in kind, leading to the near-total destruction of Smyrna.

The demographic consequences of the fighting proved far more irreversible. From 1919–22, most Armenians who had managed to return home were forced to leave Asia Minor for good. Fear of violent reprisals forced equally large numbers of Anatolian Greeks to flee Nationalist troops before the fighting ended. For Mustafa Kemal and other Nationalists, the mass flight of Anatolian Christians was a necessary evil. In the hopes of solidifying a fully "Turkish and Muslim" majority within its territory, Nationalist negotiators agreed to a postwar "exchange of population" with Greece, resulting in the expulsion of 1.2 million Greek Christians from Anatolia.

In receiving 400,000 Muslims from Greece in return, Mustafa Kemal's government made it clear that all citizens were to accept the predominance of a Turkish-speaking Muslim

April 1920
A new parliament, the **Turkish Grand National Assembly**, is convened under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk).

August 1920
Sultan Mehmed VI agrees to sign the **Treaty of Sèvres**, ratifying the Allied occupation of much of the Ottoman empire. The Grand National Assembly denounces the sultan's decision as treason.

September 1922
Mustafa Kemal's National Forces succeed in **driving Greek forces from Anatolia**, ending three years of bitter fighting.

November 1922
The Grand National Assembly abolishes the sultanate and declares the **Ottoman empire dissolved**. Mehmed VI flees into exile weeks later.

Smyrna burns in 1922. The city was all-but destroyed in fighting between Greek and Turkish troops

Mehmed VI's fall from power signalled the end of the Ottoman empire

/GETTY IMAGES

How did it all go wrong for the Ottomans?
Eugene Rogan answered the most popular questions about the empire on our podcast: *historyextra.com/ottoman-empire-podcast*

Heading home Greek troops on the outskirts of Constantinople during their retreat from Anatolia, 1922. The defeat of Greek forces was a key stepping stone to the formation of a Turkish republic

majority. Even officials who had long served the empire were potentially forbidden from retaining their citizenship if they maintained that they were of Albanian or Arab extraction. Those officials who felt such connections with their ethnic kind, one parliamentarian avowed, could leave for Albania or the new state of Syria. "From now on, our country and our army must survive [as] Turkish."

The social decomposition of the Ottoman empire reflected the culmination of elite and popular dissatisfaction with the monarchy. Many commentators came to assert that the sultan had always defied the "national will" in submitting to the demands of foreign powers over nationalist rebels. Mehmed VI's capitulation at Sèvres appeared to demonstrate that a sultan's loyalty would never be to the nation but to a monarchy and an empire that was now more than 600 years old. Rule under the Ottoman royal family, one Nationalist ideologue declared, was akin to "the oppression of the pharaohs who built the pyramids". This was the context in which, on 1 November 1922, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey voted overwhelmingly to dissolve the empire. Soon, the Republic of Turkey would be established, with Mustafa Kemal at its head.

Reputation in ruins

The condemnation of the Ottoman sultanate continued to echo among former imperial citizens. After driving Mehmed VI from power, Mustafa Kemal cleansed his new republic of many of the lingering institutions derived from the empire. In doing away with the office of the caliph and imposing a new regime of laws and "national" customs, he declared the empire to be the antithesis of the progressive ideals of the Republic of Turkey.

Postwar nationalists in Iraq and Syria came to decry Ottoman rule as a dark era of misrule and backwardness that had negated Arab rights. As the state responsible for the suffering of hundreds of thousands of Christians during the early 20th century, the Ottoman empire is often reviled by Armenians and Greeks living in the wider world today.

This collective repudiation of the empire after 1922 holds significant consequences for the descendants of the empire's last citizens. In textbooks throughout the Middle East, Ottoman history often received scant attention. Although subsequent governments came to rehabilitate aspects of imperial history, Turks remain divided as to how to best remember their collective Ottoman past. What remains unquestioned is the profound effect the empire's dissolution would have upon the geography, politics and culture of the old Ottoman world. H

Yesterday's man
Sultan Mehmed VI's support for the British and French saw him condemned as a traitor by once loyal subjects

Commentators asserted that the sultan had defied the "national will" in submitting to foreign powers

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Ryan Gingeras is an expert on Turkish, Balkan and Middle Eastern history, and author of *The Last Days of the Ottoman Empire* (Allen Lane, 2022)

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Q&A

A selection of historical **conundrums** answered by experts

Prior to 2022, has there ever been a new monarch and prime minister in Britain in the same week?

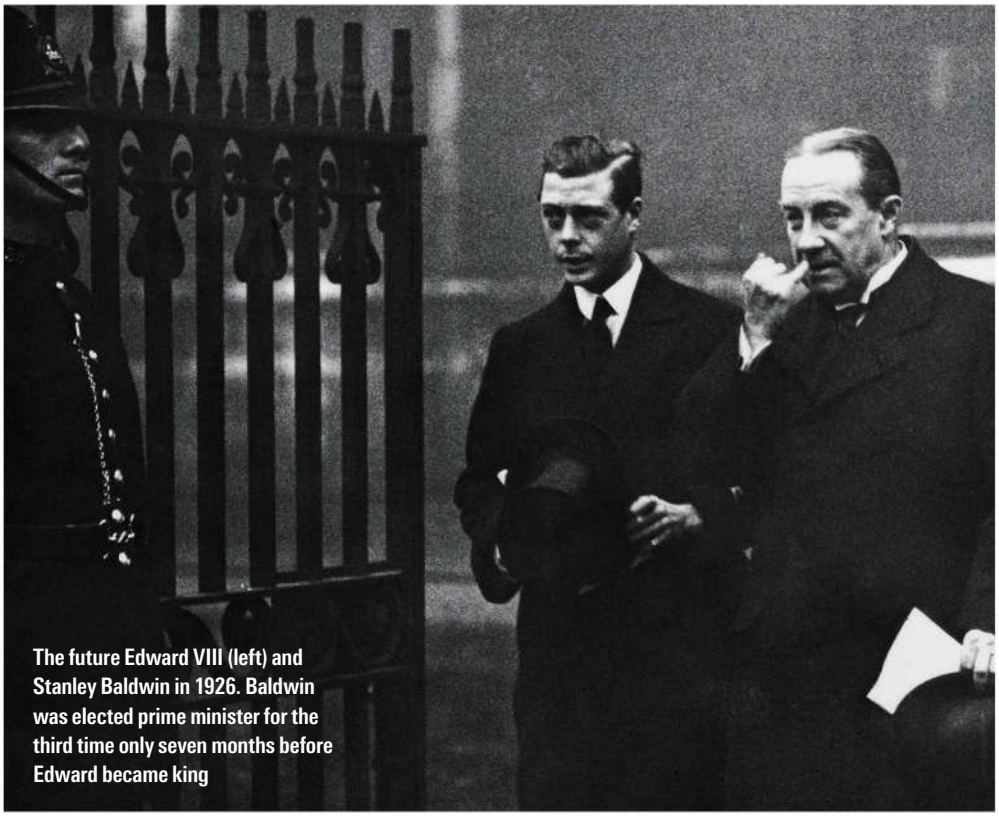
The short answer is no. Robert Walpole is generally held to be Britain's first prime minister and since he came to power in 1721, Britain has never welcomed a new monarch and prime minister in the same week – until now.

There have been a few close calls, though. On 22 November 1830, Charles Grey, 2nd Earl Grey, succeeded the Duke of Wellington as prime minister, five months after William IV had ascended the throne upon the death of his brother George IV. A century later, the Conservative politician Stanley Baldwin was elected prime minister for the third time in June 1935, just seven months before the brief reign of Edward VIII began.

In fact, prior to Charles III and Liz Truss beginning their new jobs just days apart in September 2022, the smallest gap between a new monarch and a new prime minister was a little over three months. The individuals concerned were the celebrated Second World War leader Winston Churchill and Queen Elizabeth II.

Churchill began his second stint at No 10 on 26 October 1951. He had developed a close working relationship with George VI throughout the war and soon established a similar rapport with the king's eldest daughter, who became Queen upon the death of her father on 6 February 1952.

Tracy Borman, author of *Crown & Sceptre: 1,000 Years of Kings and Queens* (Hodder, 2022)



The future Edward VIII (left) and Stanley Baldwin in 1926. Baldwin was elected prime minister for the third time only seven months before Edward became king

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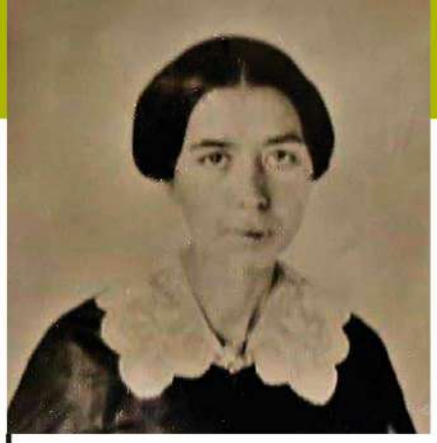


Mercy Brown's corpse was dug up and defiled by Rhode Islanders

Who was the "Rhode Island accused vampire"?

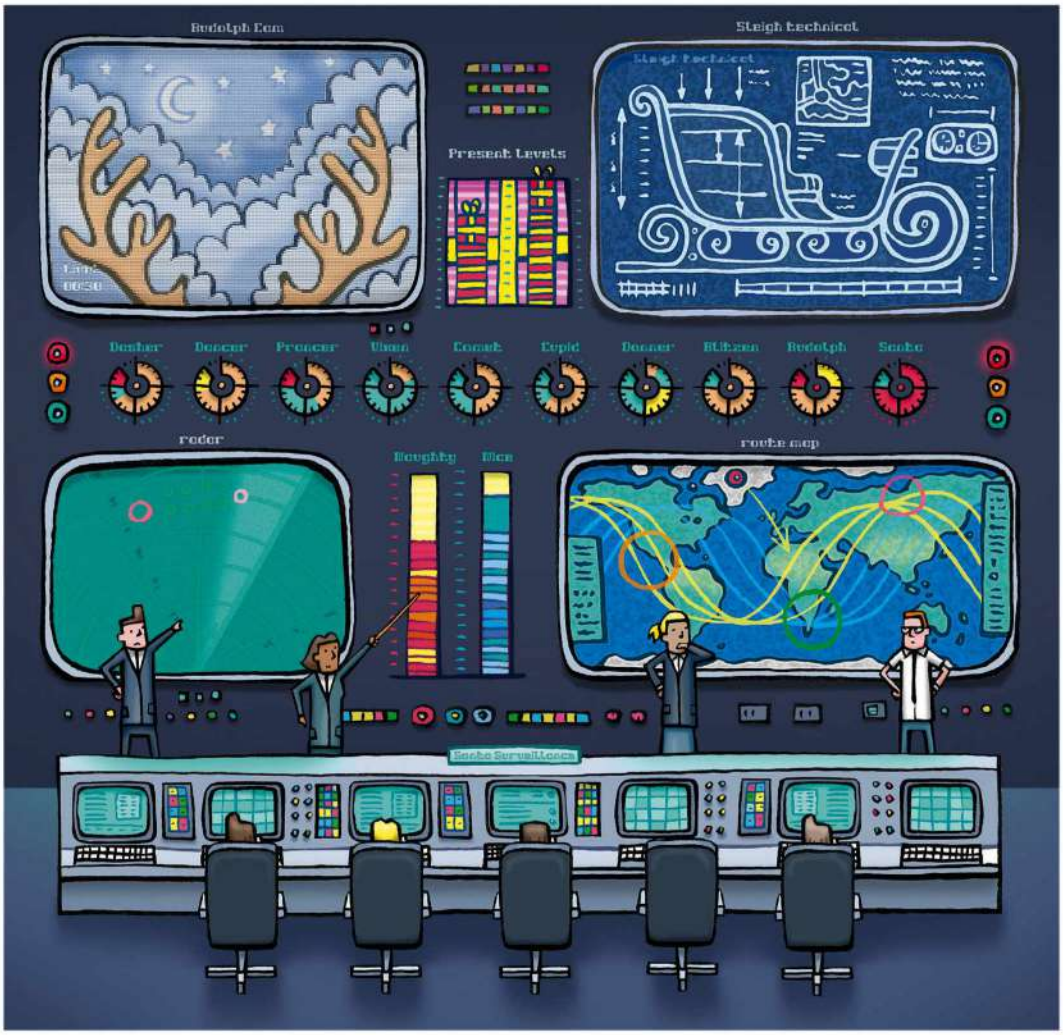
In 1896 an article appeared in the respected academic journal *The American Anthropologist* entitled "The Animistic Vampire in New England". Its author was the folklorist George R Stetson. After a long account of vampires in history, he introduced the revelation that such beliefs were alive and well in the villages and towns of Rhode Island. It had endured there, he said, by some "mysterious survival" or "occult transmission".

The area had been ravaged by consumption (tuberculosis), and numerous people had died in a cadaverous-looking state. Locals did not talk of vampires terrorising their neighbourhoods, but the press had a field day with the idea. One of the most widely reported cases was that of 19-year-old Mercy Brown, who died of consumption in January 1892.

In March, Mercy's father, George T Brown, was advised by friends and neighbours to have her body – and those of other family members who died of consumption – exhumed. According to local folk belief, as long as the heart in the corpse contained blood, the rest of the family would continue to suffer. Mercy's heart was found to have decaying clotted blood, and so it, and her liver, were removed and burned in the cemetery to break the deadly link with the living.

Was Mercy Brown considered a vampire? We can't say for sure. She certainly became a legendary figure in the development of vampire fiction over the following century. In fact, it's been suggested that her case influenced Bram Stoker's classic 1897 gothic horror novel, *Dracula*.

Owen Davies, historian specialising in witchcraft and magic



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Why did NORAD begin tracking Santa Claus in the Cold War?

The North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) has been giving updates on the progress of Santa's sleigh since the 1950s. It's now followed worldwide each Christmas (via *noradsanta.org/en*).

The official version is that in 1955 an advert for an American department store Santa phone line misprinted the phone number, sending callers to NORAD's predecessor, the Continental Air Defense Command (CONAD) instead. Colonel Harry Shoup, in charge that night, assigned an officer to give other callers a "location" for Santa and his sleigh, and so the tradition was born. There are variations on this foundation story, but basically it happened by accident.

Perhaps the US military saw a public relations opportunity, or a Cold War message about how the free world has Santa and those communists do not. But the best answer really seems to be that Americans love Christmas, and that modern "radar tracking" Santa just added to the magic.

Eugene Byrne, visiting research fellow at the University of the West of England

BRIDGEMAN/DREAMSTIME

Before the railways were built, farmers would have to walk their turkeys up to London

DID YOU KNOW...?

Will Little Larry live?

In Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, Tiny Tim (shown below, in an engraving) was nearly Puny Pete. Dickens had a habit of playing around with his characters' names: for *Martin Chuzzlewit*, written about the same time as the tale of the miser Scrooge, the hero's surname could have been Chuzzletoe. For Bob Cratchit's disabled son, Dickens considered not only Puny Pete but other alliterative names such as Little Larry and Small Sam before settling, wisely, on Tiny Tim.

Jingle bowls

The first advertising jingle heard on radio was aired on Christmas Eve 1926 in Minneapolis. It was for the breakfast cereal Wheaties, and was sung by a barbershop quartet. "Have you tried Wheaties?" the foursome sang. "They're whole wheat with all of the bran. Won't you try Wheaties? For wheat is the best food for man." Sales rocketed in Minneapolis, and the jingle was soon heard throughout the USA.

Turkey trekkers

Before the railways made transport easier, turkeys often walked from Norfolk to London in the weeks before Christmas, many of them wearing tiny boots. Turkey farmers needed to get their birds to the capital in time for the festive season. The easiest way was to drive them there on foot. The journey could take several weeks, and some farmers supplied their turkeys with tiny shoes made of leather or sacking to protect their feet from the muddy ruts in the roads. H

Nick Rennison, writer and journalist specialising in history

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BBC HISTORY MAGAZINE

PRINCESS OF EGYPT, PRISONER OF ROME . . .

Jane Draycott reveals how **Cleopatra Selene**, daughter of Mark Antony and Cleopatra, turned a tragic inheritance into a triumphant reign

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Golden touch
A contemporary bust of Cleopatra Selene, daughter of Cleopatra VII. The younger Cleopatra was a driving force behind a north African powerhouse that both served her Roman masters and honoured her famous mother's legacy

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Premier power
Octavian, shown in a first-century BC statue, conquered Egypt in 30 BC. He would go on to become Rome's first emperor

Fatal attraction
A sculpture believed to show Cleopatra VII, and (right) a bust of her lover Mark Antony. The couple had three children before killing themselves following their defeat to Octavian

Cleopatra VII was the Egyptian queen who Romans loved to hate. By the end of 30 BC, her reputation plumbed the depths. She was, after all, the "fatal monster" who had seduced Mark Antony and lured him into an alliance that had ended in defeat to Rome's emperor-in-waiting, Octavian. The whole squalid episode had reached a climax earlier that year when, with Octavian's forces closing in on the Egyptian capital of Alexandria, the couple had taken their own lives.

But there's another side to this story. For at the same time as Cleopatra's name was being dragged through the mud, enthusiasm for Egypt – which Octavian had seized for the Roman empire – was at an all-time high in Rome. There was an explosion of Egypt-inspired decoration, from ornate frescoes to hulking pyramids, like Gaius Cestius Epulo's imposing tomb at the Porta San Paolo in the south of the city.

So while Rome was consumed by a burning hatred of Cleopatra, its admiration for the kingdom that had produced her shone undimmed. One person who would, no doubt, have been baffled by this juxtaposition was Antony and Cleopatra's only daughter, Cleopatra Selene.

Born in 40 BC and raised in the Royal Palace at Alexandria, Cleopatra Selene was around 10 years old when her parents killed themselves. She and her fraternal twin brother, Alexander Helios, and their younger brother, Ptolemy Philadelphos, were taken back to Rome with Octavian and deposited in the household of his sister – and their father's former wife – Octavia, on the Palatine Hill.

While Octavian's biographer Suetonius claimed that the (future) emperor was a kindly father-figure to the children, insisting that they be cared for as if they were his own offspring, there was undoubtedly a political dimension to this decision. Retaining control of the children meant that any potential threat to Rome's power over Egypt was neutralised.

Retaining control of Cleopatra's children meant that any potential threat to Rome's power over Egypt was neutralised

The sun and the moon

This control was first expressed at Octavian's Triple Triumph – an event staged to celebrate his military successes – in the summer of 29 BC. The third and final day of the triumph commemorated his conquest of Egypt, and in the absence of their mother, the children

AKG IMAGES/BRIDGEMAN

Flaunting wealth
A denarius minted to mark the Triple Triumph of 29 BC, when Octavian commemorated the conquest of Egypt by parading Cleopatra Selene and Alexander Helios through Rome

Client king
A bust of Juba II, husband of Cleopatra Selene. Like his wife, Juba had been taken to Rome as a child captive and paraded around the imperial capital

At Rome's mercy
A statue of Cleopatra Selene and her twin brother, Alexander Helios. Octavian moved both child captives to Rome following their parents' deaths

KENNETH GARRETT/TOPFOTO

walked alongside an effigy of her entwined with the snakes that had supposedly ended her life. Cleopatra Selene was dressed as the moon and Alexander Helios as the sun, in reference to the celestial names that Antony had bestowed upon them, so as to ensure the crowds lining the processional route would recognise them. Luckily for them, unlike other enemies of Rome such as Vercingetorix of Gaul, their participation in a military triumph did not culminate in their ritual execution.

But following the triumph, what was to be done with a princess who was no longer in possession of a kingdom? Octavian made sure that Antony's other surviving children were raised as traditional Romans: Iullus Antonius, Antony's son by his third wife, Fulvia, climbed the *cursus honorum* (ladder of offices) and was elected consul. Antonia Major and Antonia Minor, Antony's two daughters by Octavia (his fourth wife), were married to suitable Roman men and numbered among their descendants the emperors Caligula, Claudius and Nero.

But Cleopatra Selene's situation was not so straightforward. She had, after all, been declared queen of Crete and Cyrenaica (part of modern-day Libya) in her own right by Antony in 34 BC, and could technically be considered the rightful queen of Egypt in the wake of her mother's death.

Luckily for Octavian, a solution presented itself in the form of another of his wards, Gaius Julius Juba. Like Cleopatra Selene, Juba was the last scion of a deposed royal family in exile. His father, Juba I, had been king of Numidia (a region north of the Sahara), but had backed the loser in the civil war between Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great. Following Pompey's defeat, Juba I had, like Cleopatra, died by suicide, and his kingdom, his treasure and his progeny had all been confiscated by Rome. Like Cleopatra Selene, Juba had been put on display in a military procession: Julius Caesar's Quadruple Triumph in 46 BC. He had been an infant at the time, and Caesar's biographer Plutarch described him as "the happiest captive ever captured".

Cleopatra Selene and Juba were married in around 25 BC before being dispatched to the newly created Roman client kingdom of Mauretania (modern Morocco and Algeria). Their union was commemorated in a poem composed by the Augustan court poet Crinagoras of Mytilene: "Great bordering regions of the world which the full stream of Nile separates from the black Aethiopians, you have by marriage made your sovereigns common to both, turning Egypt and Libya into one country. May the children of these princes ever again rule with unshaken dominion over both lands."

A visible queen

Mauretania was the only Roman client kingdom in the west of the empire. It was a vast territory, blessed with considerable natural resources that included many of the luxuries the Romans craved, such as purple dye, citron wood and exotic animals for the arena, as well as staples like grain and fish. It was populated by many different indigenous groups, which are today referred to collectively as "Berbers". There were also Greek and Roman colonies located along the region's Mediterranean coast.

While the women at the very heart of the Roman empire were expected to wield only soft power, client queens out on the periphery – in kingdoms such as Mauretania – would have been much more visible. They would have been involved in all aspects of the day-to-day running of their kingdoms as a matter of course, to the point where their subjects would have been aggrieved had they not participated fully. And of course

Financial clout
This coin, showing Juba II on one side, and Cleopatra Selene on the other, suggests that Selene saw herself as an equal partner in the relationship

Cleopatra Selene would have spent her childhood witnessing her mother doing just that, not only ruling her kingdom and receiving embassies from around the ancient Mediterranean, but also visiting and corresponding with other powerful women, such as Queen Amanirenas, who presided over Egypt's neighbour Kush. Cleopatra Selene would likely have seen no reason why, once a queen, she should not do the same.

It is little surprise, therefore, that she showed no inclination to step aside and allow Juba to take the lead in their joint enterprise. She was, after all, the one with the more prestigious lineage going back to Ptolemy, a general of Alexander the Great, and she could also boast a direct connection to the imperial family through her half-sisters and paternal grandmother, Julia.

Instead, the pair ruled together, a fact that their coinage makes abundantly clear. In coins issued jointly (like the example shown above), a portrait of Juba and the Latin legend "Rex Iuba" (King Juba) appears on one side, while a portrait of Cleopatra Selene and the Greek legend "Kleopatra Basilissa" (Queen Cleopatra) is shown on the other.

However, it is notable that Cleopatra Selene also issued her own autonomous coins. These are replete not only with references to herself through crescent moons, but also Egyptian motifs such as crocodiles, ibises, and the crown and sistrum of the goddess Isis. On one coin issue, she even styled herself "Queen Cleopatra, daughter of Queen Cleopatra". This is powerful evidence of the daughter's pride in her mother.

Ever cautious and tactful, the couple gave the Mauretanian capital city, Iol, a new name – Caesarea – in Octavian's honour. However, they still found a way to honour Cleopatra and Egypt's culture within the city's walls. The pair embarked upon a lavish building programme to make it a fitting seat for their fledgling dynasty, and they clearly took inspiration from Cleopatra Selene's former home of Alexandria and her mother's building projects there. They constructed a lighthouse in the harbour akin to the famous Pharos, an extensive palace, a forum, a theatre and an amphitheatre. They also planted a sacred grove, as well as renovating old temples and dedicating new ones. Egyptian gods and goddesses soon became popular in Mauretania, and there was a temple of Isis to which Juba dedicated crocodiles. Egyptian works of art were also imported from Cleopatra Selene's former kingdom.

So, in many ways, Caesarea was influenced by Alexandria, and in time it would become a highly sophisticated and multicultural court, populated by well-educated and prolific Greek, Roman, Egyptian and African scholars, and talented and creative artisans. In Juba's own writings, he included anecdotes about Egypt, Alexandria and the Nile that most likely came from Cleopatra Selene. This was a way for her to repurpose her memories of her mother and her former life in a manner acceptable to Roman readers.

Issues in the afterlife

Cleopatra Selene and Juba had, by all measures, turned turbulent childhoods – defeat, captivity, their parents' suicides – into a triumph. But then disaster struck. At some point around the turn of the first millennium, this north African success story was brought to a sudden end by the queen's early death. Although we don't know the precise date of Cleopatra Selene's passing, another poem composed by Crinagoras of Mytilene may provide a clue, as well as serving as an evocative eulogy to the dead queen's achievements: "The moon herself, rising at early eve, dimmed her light, veiling her mourning in night, because she saw her namesake, pretty Selene, going down dead to murky Hades.

Honouring the dead
Cleopatra Selene was interred in this magnificent mausoleum (in modern-day Algeria). The queen's posthumous reputation added lustre to the reigns of her husband, Juba II, and her son Ptolemy

Unlike her mother, Cleopatra Selene succeeded quietly rather than failed loudly. That may be why she's little known

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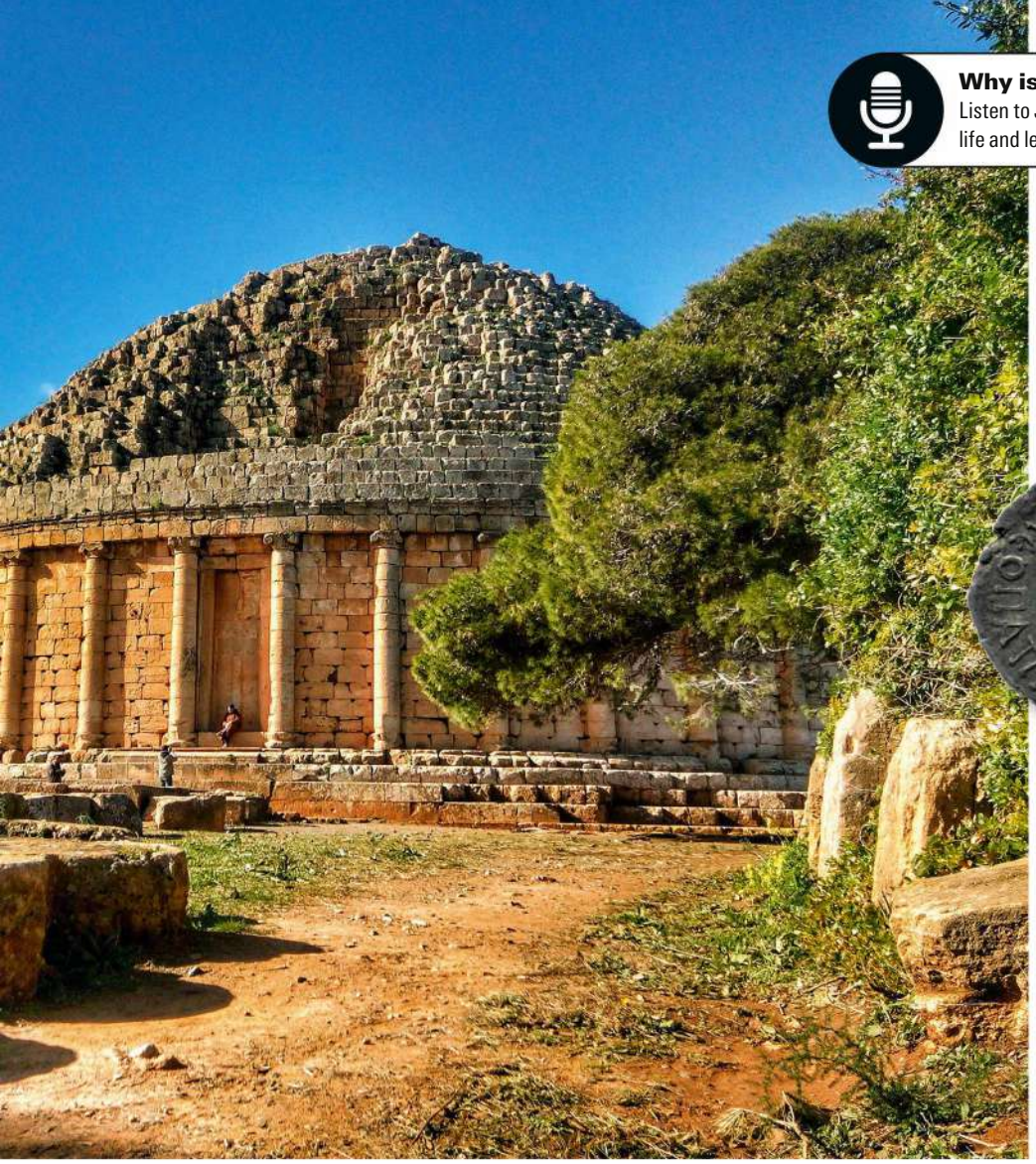

Why is the world in love with Cleopatra?
Listen to Joyce Tyldesley discussing the Egyptian queen's life and legacy: *historyextra.com/cleopatra-podcast*

On her she had bestowed the beauty of her light, and with her death she mingled her own darkness."

In his poem, Crinagoras appears to suggest that Cleopatra Selene's death coincided with a lunar eclipse. This has led historians to propose two possible dates for her demise – 23 March 5 BC and 4 May AD 3 – both of which witnessed lunar eclipses that were visible in Caesarea and Rome.

The queen was interred in a magnificent mausoleum, the remains of which can still be seen near Cherchell in Algeria today. Juba continued to rule Mauretania for two decades after his wife's death, and their son Ptolemy was appointed as a co-ruler in AD 21. (Note that his name was taken from his maternal rather than his paternal lineage, another indication of how Cleopatra Selene promoted her mother and her dynasty.)

Even after her death, Cleopatra Selene remained a significant figure in the kingdom. A hoard deposited near Tangier contains coins that can be dated to the period AD 11–17, and includes those not only minted by Cleopatra Selene and Juba together, but also ones issued by the queen alone. This suggests that her coinage was not taken out of circulation upon her death and was still in use by her former subjects two decades later. That Juba and Ptolemy were able to stabilise their joint reign was, no doubt, thanks in part to their wife and mother's enduring lustre.

Cleopatra Selene had an immense impact on her kingdom and the wider Roman world during her lifetime – even beyond it. So why is she so little known today? Paradoxically, the answer may lie in her success. Roman historians were very much fixated on what was happening in the centre of the empire. They would only mention client-kingdoms when there was a problem. The fact that they didn't write much about Mauretania suggests that things were going smoothly there.

Unlike her mother and other Roman client-queens such as Boudicca, Cleopatra Selene seems to have succeeded quietly rather than have failed loudly. As the saying goes: "Well-behaved women rarely make history." H

Jane Draycott is a lecturer in ancient history at the University of Glasgow. Her latest book, *Cleopatra's Daughter*, was published by Head of Zeus in November

DREAMSTIME/BRITISH MUSEUM

MONEY TALKS

How Cleopatra Selene used her coinage to honour her Egyptian roots

This coin depicts Cleopatra Selene accompanied by the Greek legend "Kleopatra Basilissa" (Queen Cleopatra). The queen is wearing her hair in the "melon" hairstyle favoured by her mother 1. She is also sporting a diadem 2 (the headdress of Hellenistic monarchs), indicating her rank as a queen in her own right rather than by marriage.

A crocodile 3, which was often used as the symbol of Egypt in this period, takes centre stage in this coin. The animal appeared on coins issued on Crete during Cleopatra Selene's brief reign over the island, so it is possible that she considered it something of a personal symbol.

Through this coin, which depicts the accoutrements of the goddess Isis – her crown 4 and sistrum 5, a ceremonial rattle – Cleopatra Selene may be referencing her mother. Cleopatra presented herself as Isis in public and on her coinage, and was known as the New Isis. It appears that this goddess was equally favoured by Cleopatra Selene, as there was a temple dedicated to her in Mauretania's capital city, Caesarea.

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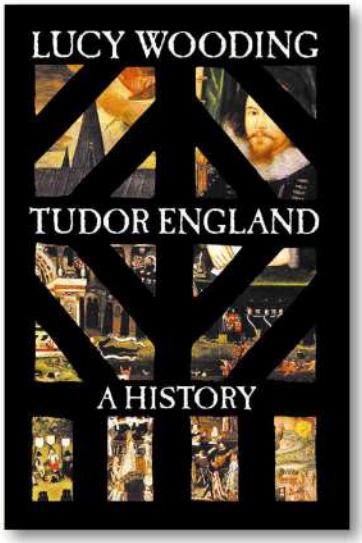

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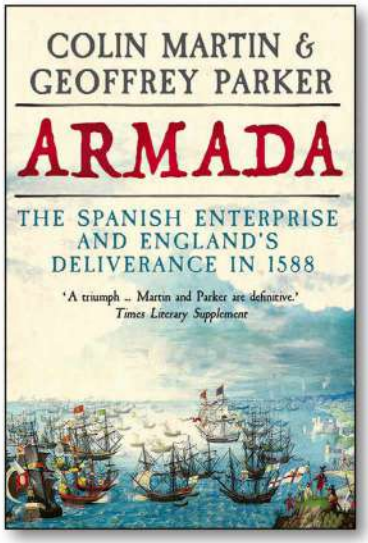
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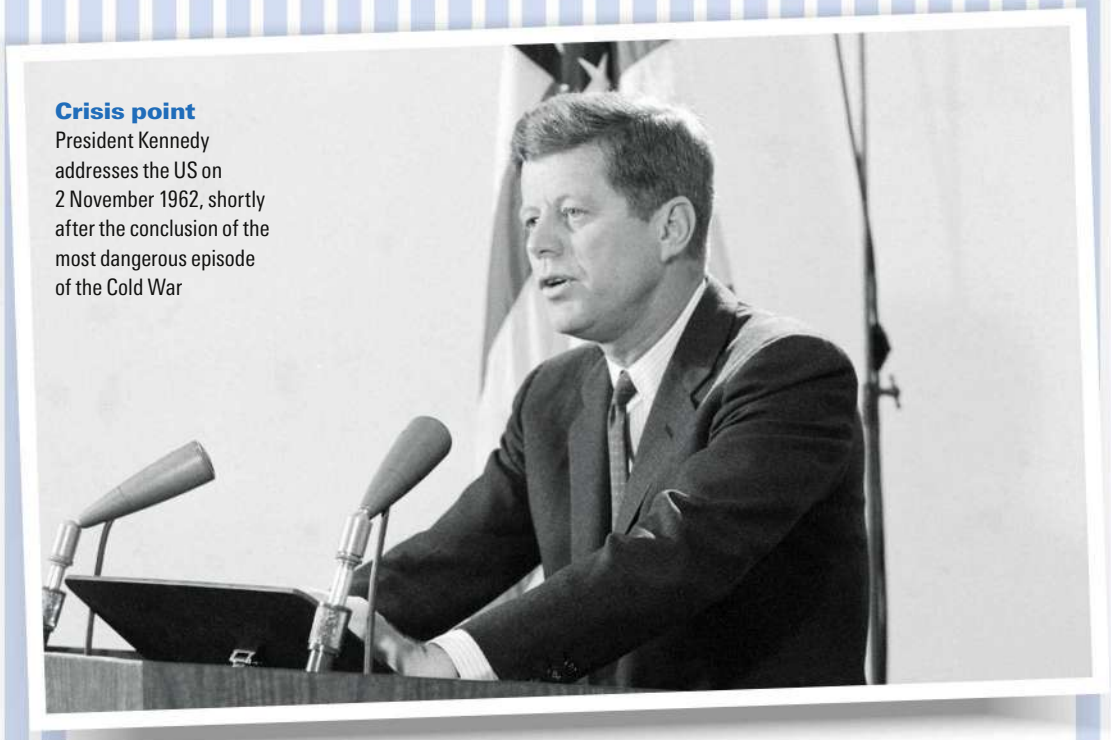

Crisis point
President Kennedy addresses the US on 2 November 1962, shortly after the conclusion of the most dangerous episode of the Cold War

FRAN MONKS/GETTY IMAGES

"If the Americans had bombed Cuba in 1962, escalation would have been almost inevitable"

In his new book, **Max Hastings** turns to one of the most dangerous fortnights in history, when the United States and Soviet Union took the world to the brink of Armageddon

INTERVIEW BY **ELINOR EVANS**

American officials display the location of missile sites in Cuba in a 1962 UN Security Council meeting

IN CONTEXT

In July 1962 the USSR premier **Nikita Khrushchev**, in agreement with Cuba's leader **Fidel Castro**, made the fateful decision to **place nuclear warheads in Cuba**, just 90 miles from the US mainland. The Americans' discovery of the weapons in October 1962 sparked a **13-day standoff** between the superpowers of east and west that became known as the **Cuban missile crisis**. It is widely regarded as the most dangerous period of the Cold War.

On 16 October, US president **John F Kennedy** convened his closest advisors in a secret body later known as **ExComm** (Executive Committee of the National Security Council), to discuss a response to the Soviet act of aggression. "Go to general war," was the advice of some of the president's closest advisors, who pushed for **air strikes or a full-scale invasion** of the island.

After nearly six days of top-secret meetings, Kennedy – who had come to regard a nuclear strike and descent into war as "a final failure" – favoured a **naval blockade**. He delivered the news to the world in a televised speech on 22 October 1962; **Cuba was cut off from any military aid** from its communist ally in the east, and America had avoided a declaration of war.

A tense series of letters between the leaders followed, with Khrushchev and Kennedy eventually reaching a **diplomatic compromise** in which the Soviets agreed to remove missiles from Cuba, and in return Kennedy secretly agreed to remove American nuclear missiles stationed in Turkey. The crisis was diffused, and the world was brought back from the brink of nuclear war.

Can you introduce readers to your narrative of the crisis and how it seeks to handle this episode, 60 years on?
When I started to write this book, it seemed like simply a piece of history or archaeology. One thing that has been extremely spooky is that – as I researched and wrote this account of how the world, in the midst of the Cold War, came closer than at any time in its history to Armageddon, to a nuclear war – President Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine. Suddenly the whole thing achieves an immediacy, because we are looking again at an incredibly reckless, dangerous and ruthless leader in the Kremlin who is prepared to take extraordinary risks to try and frighten the world into acquiescing in these acts of aggression.

Of course, this caused me to significantly change parts of the beginning and the end of my narrative. I've said: "Here is this terrifying episode that happened 60 years ago. And what can we learn from it about the experiences we're going through today?" Alas.

Putin is obviously an inescapable figure on the world stage now. And you write in *Abyss* that, contrary to ideas that personalities play only a minor part in determining history, the figures involved in the Cuban missile crisis dominated decisions and decided the outcome. What can you tell us about the key players?
There have been many accounts of the so-called "13 days" in October 1962 that followed the Americans' discovery that the Soviets had secretly placed nuclear missiles in Cuba. I think it's a mistake just to look at that brief period. To understand what it all means, you've got to know quite a bit about what the United States, the Soviet Union and Cuba were at that time. And, of course, these three extraordinary personalities.

First is Fidel Castro, the guerrilla leader who took over Cuba from dictator Fulgencio Batista at the beginning of 1959. Then there's President John F Kennedy who remains, I think, by far the most fascinating and extraordinary US president of the past century – even more so than Franklin Roosevelt. And finally, the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, this frightening thug; curiously, an impressive thug in some ways – you didn't get to the top of the Soviet Union in those days without climbing over a mountain of corpses. A lot of the first half of my book is about these people and these countries.

The first thing to understand is how appallingly the US had treated Cuba for the previous century. The Americans always like to think that they don't have an empire, but they treated Cuba as a colony. They decided everything, and most of the profits from Cuban sugar and tobacco went straight into American pockets. American gangsters were running all the casinos in Havana. With the ascent of Castro, the Americans suddenly found that they had been kicked out. One of the people interviewed for the book was the so-called head of protocol for the Castro government. He said: "People from the American embassy would turn up at our offices and say, 'Here's what you're going to do, we're from the embassy and you'll do it.'" And of course, the Cubans said: "It's not like that anymore, this is our own country. We're a sovereign country."

How did the alliance between the Soviet Union and Cuba lead to such a dangerous crisis?
When it became clear that the US was going to seek to isolate Cuba and topple its leader, Castro turned to the other superpower – to the Soviet Union and Nikita Khrushchev.

Khrushchev was absolutely enchanted by Castro. He was reminded of the 1917 revolutionaries, the young idealists who had taken over Moscow and Petrograd. He decided to give total support to Castro. In the spring of 1962, after a year of supplying weapons to Castro, Khrushchev was staying at his *dacha* [second home] on the Black Sea, looking through his binoculars. He was infuriated, knowing that 200 miles or so across the water, there were American nuclear missiles [in Turkey] pointed at his *dacha*. One day in April 1962, he said to his defence minister, Marshal Rodion Malinovsky, "How would it be if we throw a hedgehog down Uncle Sam's pants?" In other words: "How would it be if we install nuclear missiles in Cuba?"

Khrushchev knew that the Soviet Union was far weaker than the United States. He was obliged to face the fact that, at the same time as he was saying that socialism was going to take over the world, most of the Soviet Union was living in what Americans would think was abject poverty. Bread was rationed in some regions, and people had tiny televisions which they had to watch through water-filled magnifiers to make the picture big enough. Whereas on the other side of the world, you had Americans all eating steaks, with a growing audience for colour television.

GETTY IMAGES/TOPFOTO

Action stations On Havana waterfront, Cuban soldiers wait by anti-aircraft artillery, after receiving warning of an invasion from the United States

Slim pickings A vendor sells food in Moscow's streets, 1958. Poverty was rife in the Soviet Union, and even bread was rationed in some regions

Meeting of minds Cuban premier Fidel Castro and Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev meet for the first time in New York in 1960, at the General Assembly of the United Nations

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"When it became clear that the US was going to seek to isolate Cuba, Castro turned to the other superpower – to the Soviet Union"

This seemed so monstrously wicked and unfair to Khrushchev. It made him rage that – after all the Soviet Union had suffered in the Great Patriotic War, after losing 27 million people – the Americans should end up so rich and with this great nuclear arsenal, and that the Americans were trying to tell the world what to do. He was determined to even the score, to show the Americans that they didn't rule the world.

Your book includes some staggering testimony from the ExComm meetings following the US discovery of the missiles in Cuba that shows just how close the west came to responding with a nuclear strike. How near did the world come to nuclear war?

The first thing Kennedy said, at the White House when he heard about this, was: "We're probably going to have to bomb them." At that stage, the Americans had no idea that there were also tactical nuclear weapons, they had no idea of the strength of the Soviet forces in Cuba. The US chiefs of staff wanted full bombing, an American invasion of Cuba. All through the crisis though, all the civilians around JFK, and the president himself, were always sure that they had to go very carefully, be very cautious. But America's generals and

How close was World War Three?
Explore the 13 perilous days of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis in our podcast series: *historyextra.com/cuban-missile-crisis*

admirals were saying "we've got to go in and zap these people. We've got to bomb them. We've got to invade them."

My view, which I've expressed in my book very strongly, is that there is no doubt that neither the Kremlin nor the White House wanted a third world war, they didn't want all-out war. But the Soviets had put hundreds of nuclear weapons in Cuba with no technical safeguards to stop local commanders from firing them. Had the Americans done what many people around the president wanted – bombed and invaded – I think the chances of these weapons not being used, and the idea the Russians would sit there and take devastating casualties to their own forces and not respond, is for the fairies. Once they started that, escalation would have been almost inevitable. You had a terrifying situation.

In those first days, as Kennedy presided over daily and sometimes hourly meetings of the so-called ExComm, they talked through every option: bombing, blockade, etc. The one thing they all agreed upon was that they could not do nothing. By around the Friday [19 October 1962], the chiefs of staff and McGeorge Bundy, Kennedy's national security adviser, were urging towards bombing and probably invasion. But I think that – although JFK made many other mistakes in his time as president in his thousand days – when I listen to the recordings and read the transcripts of those meetings, he stands head-and-shoulders above all the others in his steadiness of purpose and his clear, unflinching understanding that if all this went wrong, we were going to have World War Three.

You write in *Abyss* of a collective wisdom on both sides that transcended the misjudgements of both the Kremlin and the White House. What was it about Kennedy and Khrushchev and their administrations that made this such an extraordinary episode?

I'm a passionate believer in diplomacy and diplomats. One of the scary things that's happened in the last 20 years is that suddenly national leaders think the diplomats don't matter anymore. I don't think it's just me as an old man being nostalgic. The quality of some of those top British diplomats and top American diplomats was so impressive.

Today, I'm afraid, there are no successors, because both American governments and British governments treat their diplomats with contempt. They get the diplomats they deserve, who are not people of remotely similar stature. It's one of the things I've come to believe passionately about studying the Cold War. I hope anybody who reads my books will have a sense not only about the missile crisis, but about the wider Cold War. It was so important all the way through to keep talking. And even if the talks didn't seem to get anywhere, just the fact there was dialogue was terribly important.

I was rather shocked a few years ago when a British general said to me, "You do realise, don't you, that nowadays we talk less to the Russians than we did in the worst days of the Cold War?"

International response Images of Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky and Russian president Vladimir Putin loom over a TV interview in October 2022 by journalist Caroline Roux with the French president Emmanuel Macron. Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, hugely escalating a war that began in 2014

> **"Kennedy had a clear, unflinching understanding that if all this went wrong, we were going to have World War Three"**

How do you think the international situation today, particularly regarding the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, compares with that of the missile crisis?

President Putin today represents a terrifying threat. I personally believe that he's a more dangerous and less stable figure than was Khrushchev, who had to consult the Soviet Presidium; although Khrushchev dominated the Presidium, its opinion still mattered. Putin appears to act entirely alone. I'm not suggesting that if we'd had better diplomats then Putin might have acted differently. But I think in general, in international affairs, it is so vital that we understand the importance of dialogue, and the importance of understanding each other in a way that, I'm afraid, I don't think governments do today. And it is very scary.

Sure, you can say, what about Suez and Harold Macmillan, who only a few years earlier had been complicit in the British government being mad enough to invade Egypt in 1956? And of course later, the best and the brightest around Kennedy during Cuba, they got the United States into Vietnam.

I'm not naive enough to suggest that those people all had the wisdom of Solomon all the time. But one effect of researching this book and reading all the transcripts of who said what during the crisis, is that one can see that people like Robert McNamara [US secretary of defense 1961–68], whom I met later and whose reputation was destroyed during

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Question time US secretary of defense Robert McNamara speaks at a press conference held on 20 October 1962 about the naval blockade of Cuba

Joint effort Members of the Organization of American States, founded in 1948 to further security and cooperation in the Americas, vote to blockade Cuba during a meeting on the missile crisis in Washington DC in 1962

Vietnam, was brilliant on the missile crisis. All the way through, he looked for ways of very graduated escalation, with the blockade as a first step. The chiefs of staff loathed him. After the missile crisis, one of them said – and I quote this in the book – that McNamara as defence secretary was the most dangerous man in America. They meant that he wouldn't do the horrible things that they wanted to do, including risking nuclear war.

Even if these were not guys who got everything right all their lives, by gosh, they were guys who got a lot right in those days.

What did you make of the legacy of the Cuban missile crisis during your reporting in the US in the late 1960s, and in the years that followed?

I'm not sure I would have had the nerve to write this book about what's overwhelmingly an American subject, but for the fact that I lived in the United States in 1967–68, and I always remember at the beginning of '68, sitting in the White House Cabinet Room listening to President Lyndon B Johnson, with a group of other foreign journalists, talking about another American crisis, in Vietnam. I was taking a look around the Cabinet Room in those days and thinking, "This was the room where ExComm met earlier in the decade."

When I was there as a young reporter, I met a lot of the people who were involved intimately in the missile crisis, including [secretary of state] Dean Rusk, [attorney general] Robert Kennedy, and McNamara, and [presidential speechwriter and historian] Arthur Schlesinger became a close friend.

Of course, at that period, America was racked by the whole Vietnam agony. It did give one an insight into how, on the one hand, it was the most exciting country on Earth. No one doubted its towering stature in the sixties; it was the absolute powerhouse of the world, for its technology, its wealth, its power. But on the other hand, one witnessed the United States doing terrible things, conspicuously including the appalling racial strife. There was always this contrast between the wonderful things about America – which remain true today – and also the terrible things; somehow America has a tragic talent for presiding over some of the worst things that have happened on the planet. I was there in the Vietnam period, and later reported in Vietnam. When I see all that's going on in Ukraine – and I hasten to add that this does not make me an apologist for Putin – I can't forget that "our side", if you like, has its own share of shames, and some of them date from the 1960s.

I do feel it was a big help to me in writing this book to have been around in the sixties and to have known some of those people, and to remember how it all felt. Because in the 21st century, to you who were not even born until ages after that, it seems an eternity away. To me it almost seems like yesterday. H

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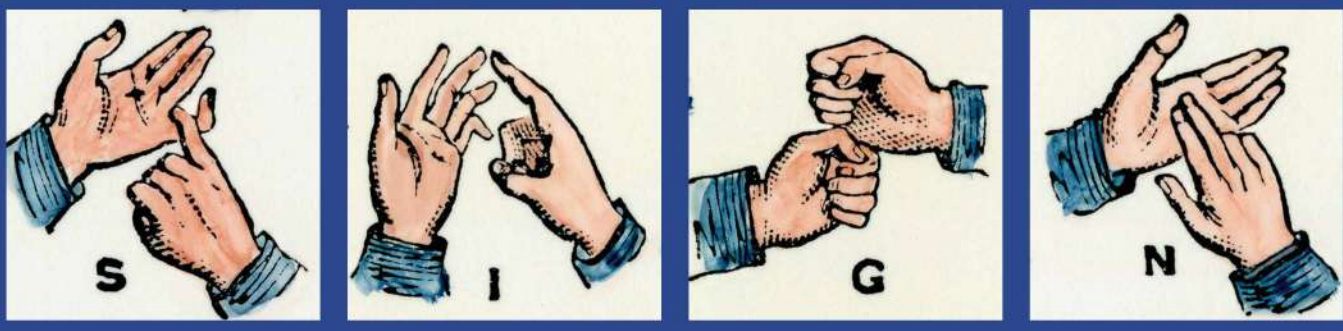
Ringside seat Max Hastings photographed in 1970. He lived in the United States from 1967–68 and met many of the key players on the US side of the Cuban missile crisis

Max Hastings is a leading British journalist, author, broadcaster and former newspaper editor who is currently a columnist for *The Times* and *Bloomberg Opinion*. His latest book is *Abyss: The Cuban Missile Crisis 1962* (William Collins, 2022)

Hear what life was like for ordinary Cubans during the crisis in BBC World Service's **Witness History:** *bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p00bgtq2*

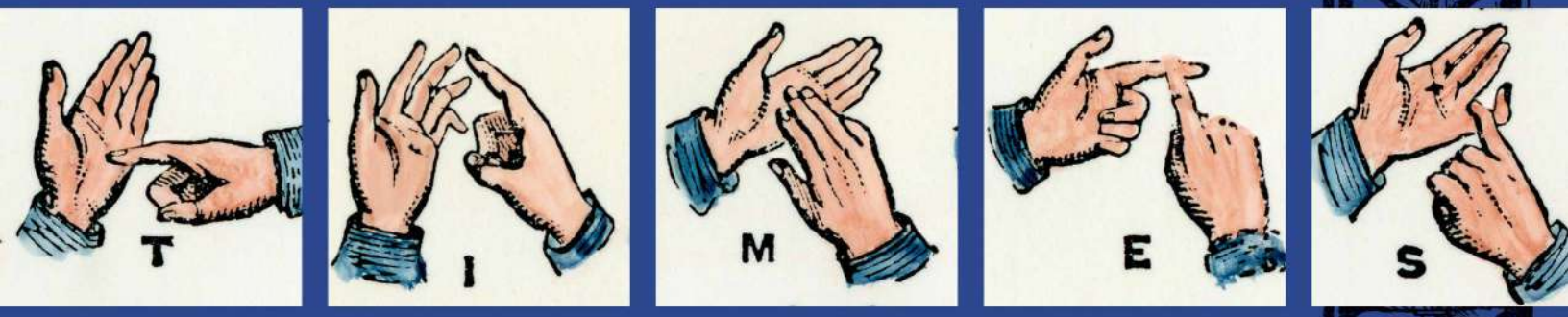


Signs of the

When Thomas Speller announced he was getting married in 1618, the news sparked a bitter family feud – simply because he was deaf. **Rosamund Oates** explores what Thomas's case tells us about the challenges facing deaf people in early modern England

ALAMY/DREAMSTIME

Communication aid
These illustrations are taken from a sign language alphabet from the 19th century. Attitudes towards congenitally deaf people had changed significantly by the early modern period



In December 1618, a young couple, Thomas Speller and Sara Earle, were married in the church of St Botolph Without Aldgate in the City of London. They were both from Essex, but had been forced to marry in London because of increasingly heated arguments surrounding the match. But this was not a secret marriage: it went ahead with the full blessing of the Bishop of London's chancellor. What had made it controversial was that Thomas Speller was deaf and communicated entirely in signs, using a rudimentary form of sign language.

The case reveals a surprising amount about the experiences of people in the early modern period, and the ways in which they were regarded by the society around them. Today we would describe Speller as prelingually deaf – having never learned a spoken language – but in this period people used the term "deaf and dumb". Yet while Speller could not speak vocally, he was more than capable of communicating with hearing friends and family.

Thomas was deaf from birth, one of several congenitally deaf children born to a wealthy family in Hatfield Broadoak in Essex. His father, Henry, was close enough to the county's leading gentleman, Sir Francis Barrington, to ask him to be a guardian for his deaf children. Barrington took his duties seriously. After Henry's death in 1615, he ensured yearly payments were made to the Speller children, oversaw the investment of their capital, and intervened to ensure that Thomas could marry the woman he chose.

Thomas was a blacksmith, which was probably how he met Sara: her father, John, was a blacksmith in a nearby village. John was delighted with the match, but Thomas's family objected, his mother complaining that John and Sara had "stolen" Thomas away. At stake was not just a young man's happiness, but also a considerable amount of money: Thomas was due to inherit £200 on his marriage (around £40,000 today).

The case made its way to the consistory court in London. At the heart of the argument was whether Thomas, who was in his mid-twenties, could consent to marriage because he was deaf. His mother and "others that have had the custody of him" said he could not, arguing that he was being forced into the marriage. Barrington and the local minister from Hatfield Broadoak stepped in to support the young couple, but the decisive evidence came from Thomas himself. He and Sara went to see the judge on their own, and the "said Thomas Speller by signs and the said Sara by words did signify their consent".

Thomas's intervention convinced the chancellor to issue a marriage licence at the end of October 1618, but tensions were so high in Hatfield Broadoak that the ceremony was moved to London, where the pair eventually married on 7 December. The parish clerk made a detailed record of the ceremony "because we never had the like", describing how Thomas showed his "willingness to have the said marriage rites solemnised… by bringing the book of common prayer (and his licence) in one hand and his Bride in the other, unto the minister of our parish, Mr Briggs, and made the best signs he could to show that he was willing to be married".

Alternatives to speech

At the heart of this case was the question of whether Thomas could consent to get married because he was prelingually deaf. There was a long legal tradition, based on Roman law, of treating prelingually deaf people as if they were children or mentally incapable. Some authors used classical philosophy to argue that deafness was a cognitive disability, claiming that if deaf people could not speak vocally they were incapable of rational thought. Others suggested that, because deaf people could neither hear any explanations, nor signal their agreement through speech, they should be regarded as "infants". This had implications not only for marriage, but also for their legal standing. A popular legal handbook published by barrister Michael Dalton in 1618 advised magistrates that if "a man born deaf and dumb killeth another, that is no felony, for he cannot know whether he did evil or no". Speech was held up as evidence of a rationality, and across Europe educators tried to give deaf children a legal identity by teaching them to speak vocally.

Visual learning
An engraving from a 17th-century deaf education manual

As Thomas Speller's case shows, however, many people in the early modern era already believed deaf people could communicate eloquently using signs, and that signing was a lawful alternative to vocal speech. In the 12th century, Pope Innocent III had issued a decree allowing deaf people to use signs to get married, and in following centuries deaf people across Europe took part in church sacraments (of which marriage was just one) using signs. By the time Thomas and Sara were wed, deaf marriage was well established in Britain and across Europe, with Catholic and Protestant churches conducting marriages in sign language. In England many of these couples took the precautionary step of getting a marriage licence, but increasingly the unusual nature of the wedding was not even noted in parish registers.

The care shown by the consistory court in Speller's case was, however, understandable. Forced marriage was a concern when it came to deaf weddings. In 1632, Christobel Cox and George Blunt – a prelingually deaf man from Somerset – got married by licence. The marriage does not seem to have been a happy one. By 1643, Blunt had left the family and argued that he should not be forced to maintain his wife and three of their children because he had not knowingly consented to the marriage in the first place. The case made it to the Court of Common Pleas, where the judge noted that "it is possible the marriage may be good, but it may be questionable" and asked local magistrates to gather evidence from the minister and witnesses about whether George "understood what he did when he joined hands with the woman".

Doubts about consent could also raise a useful question mark over the legality of unwelcome marriages. Anne Darcy, a prelingually deaf heiress to a large estate in Warwickshire, married Ebeneezer Overton at the church of St Bartholomew the Great in London in March 1671. Her family were outraged, claiming that Anne had been forced into a "pretended marriage", and secured a licence to allow her to marry a more suitable match later that year. This time the wedding took place in her local parish in Warwickshire, under the watchful eye of her family.

Lost in translation

What kind of signs might Thomas Speller have used to convince the chancellor that he wanted to marry Sara? Their conversation pre-dated the standardised sign languages of later centuries, but it is evident that the

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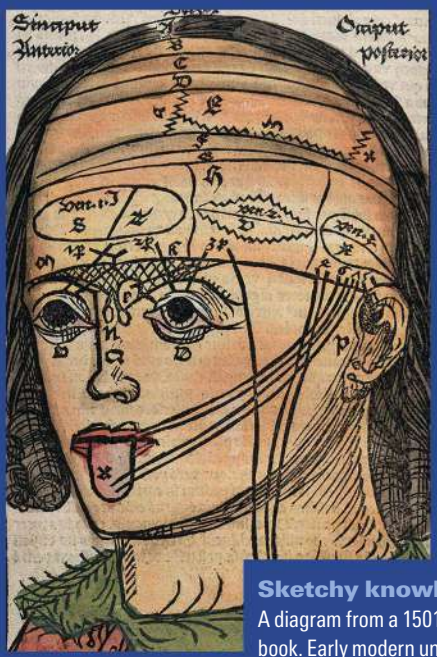
Vows of silence
Pope Innocent III as seen in a contemporary depiction. In the 12th century, the religious leader passed a decree allowing deaf people to use sign language in marriage ceremonies



Sketchy knowledge
A diagram from a 1501 anatomy book. Early modern understandings of both the causes and effects of deafness were limited

Body language
An 18th-century illustrated guide to counting using hand gestures. Although there was no single standardised sign language during this period, deaf people often used complex signing systems to communicate

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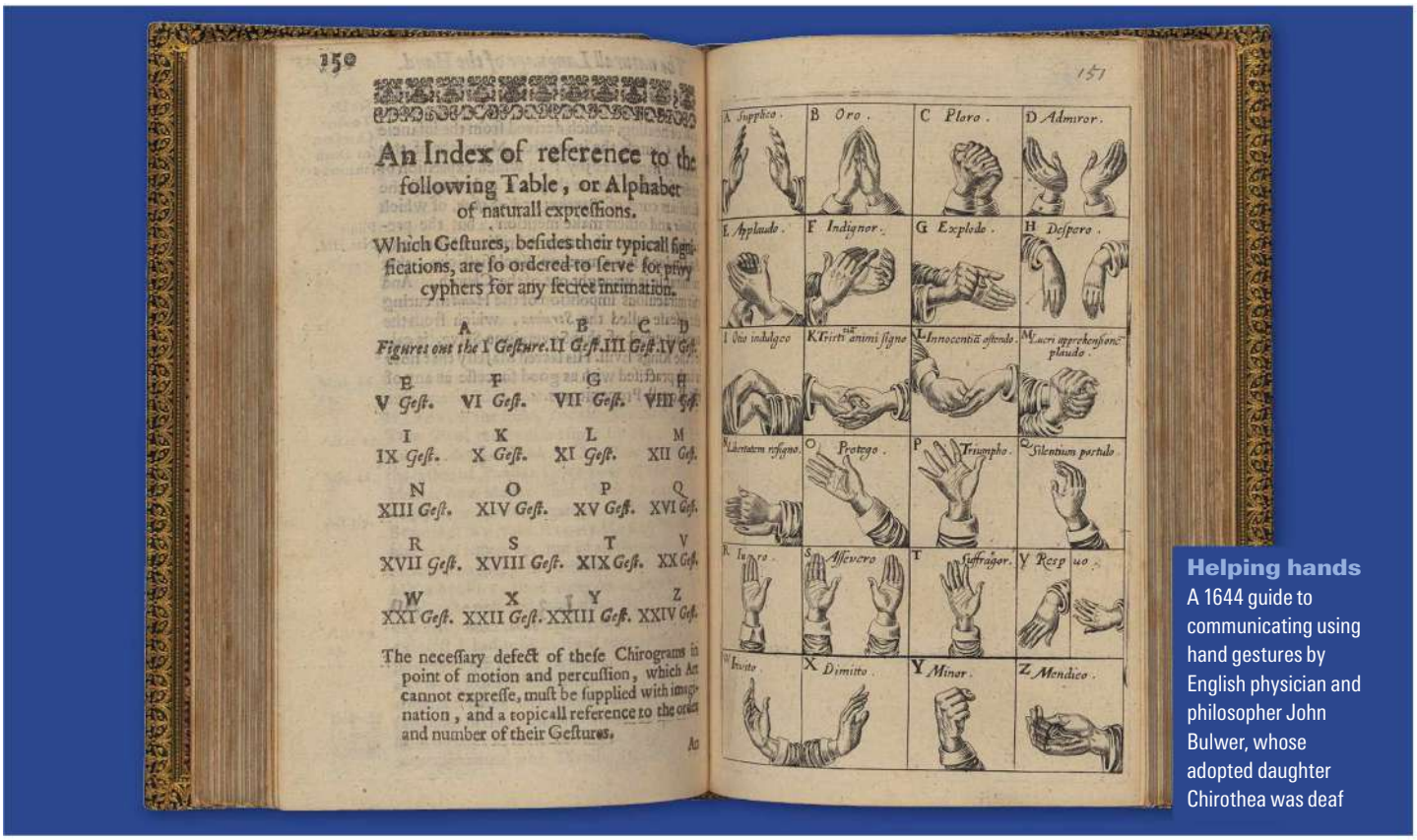
signs used by deaf people in this period were complex. A bookbinder in 17th-century Exeter, John Dight, was refused the Eucharist by several local ministers "because his motions and signs were not as intelligible to them" as they were to his family. Dight took to carrying around a notebook with pictures that he used to explain his meaning to "those who were dull of apprehending him", but "to others, more quicker of understanding, he would, with a motion of the hand, make it as obvious and intelligible" as if he had spoken. In more complex interactions with strangers – dinner parties, for example – Dight relied on his nephew to interpret for him.

There was a growing sense in this period that deaf signs were distinct from the general gestures made by hearing people. When William Osbaldestone made his will in 1738, he left everything to his deaf daughter, Catherine, recording that he had taken "great care and expense in having proper persons teach her by signs". After legal wrangles developed over who should care for Catherine and her large inheritance, two of her cousins claimed that they should be her guardians because they "understood how to converse with her by proper signs".

Although Thomas Speller could not speak vocally, he was more than capable of communicating with friends and family

In the case of Thomas Speller, the chancellor collected additional evidence from a range of witnesses to be sure he correctly understood Thomas's meaning. Contemporaries were


150
An Index of reference to the following Table, or Alphabet of naturall expressions.
Which Gestures, besides their typicall significations, are so ordered to serve for privy cyphers for any secret intimation.
157

Helping hands
A 1644 guide to communicating using hand gestures by English physician and philosopher John Bulwer, whose adopted daughter Chirothea was deaf

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aware that deaf people who relied on an interpreter were vulnerable to misrepresentation, particularly in matters of property and inheritance. In 1708, the Lord Chancellor intervened in an inheritance case, to prevent a deaf man transferring all his lands to his uncle when it was revealed that the uncle was also the person interpreting for him in court.

Care and the community

Although some families, including the Spellers, created arrangements to provide ongoing support for deaf relatives, not all setups were so formal. This could leave the deaf person vulnerable. Margaret Kirkby from Woodplumpton in Lancashire first came to the attention of magistrates at the Quarter Sessions in 1659, when it appeared that she had fallen into poverty after her parents' death. Aged 29, she was described as "lame" as well as deaf, and "altogether incapable of working or doing anything towards her maintenance at all". Eventually she was housed with a local family.

In 1691, meanwhile, shortly after his brother's death, Evan Shaw was evicted from the house he had shared with his brother and sister-in-law, despite his "hard work and labour" for them. Congenitally deaf, Shaw was in his seventies, "weak and infirm". He tried to survive on his own for a year, but in 1692 neighbours reported that he "lieth in a barn in rags and litter, not fit for a Christian", and requested more charitable support from the overseers of the local town.

Work and, often, an apprenticeship were seen as the path that deaf people could take towards independent living

Deafness did not, however, automatically trigger charitable support. Many deaf people expected, and were expected, to support themselves. In London, the local parish denied poor relief to a deaf woman, Sarah Robertson, when she turned 18, because they argued she was able to work. Deaf people did often find work in a number of specific occupations: some, including Thomas Speller, were blacksmiths, a common profession for deaf men since hearing loss was a common side-effect. Thomas's brother, Andrew, became a tailor, which was another popular occupation with young deaf men – possibly because it could largely be taught by sight.

Some deaf women, meanwhile, became servants: in 1650 Sir William Acton recalled that he had employed a prelingually deaf woman, Elizabeth Bowra, for more than 50 years. Particularly when the parish was responsible for looking after a deaf child, work and, often, an apprenticeship were seen as the path to independent living.

Back in Essex, it soon became apparent that Henry Speller's attempts to support his deaf children had stored up trouble further down the line. Disagreements between the Speller and Earle families became so heated that, a couple of weeks after the wedding, they were forced into a formal process of arbitration. Thomas's mother, Winifred, and his brother, John, had to sign an agreement to keep the peace with Sara's father until a formal settlement was reached in March 1619.

These cases shed light on a little-told aspect of early modern history: the lives of deaf people and past experiences of disability. As these stories show, deaf men and women were often integrated into their communities, with families, marriages and jobs. Throughout the period, and despite philosophical works arguing otherwise, deaf people used sign language in a host of different settings, demonstrating both their eloquence and their rationality. H

Dr Rosamund Oates is a reader in history at Manchester Metropolitan University. Research for this feature was carried out with the support of the Leverhulme Trust

For more information on deaf history, visit the **Deaf Museum and Art Gallery**, which has just reopened in Manchester: *bdhs.org.uk*

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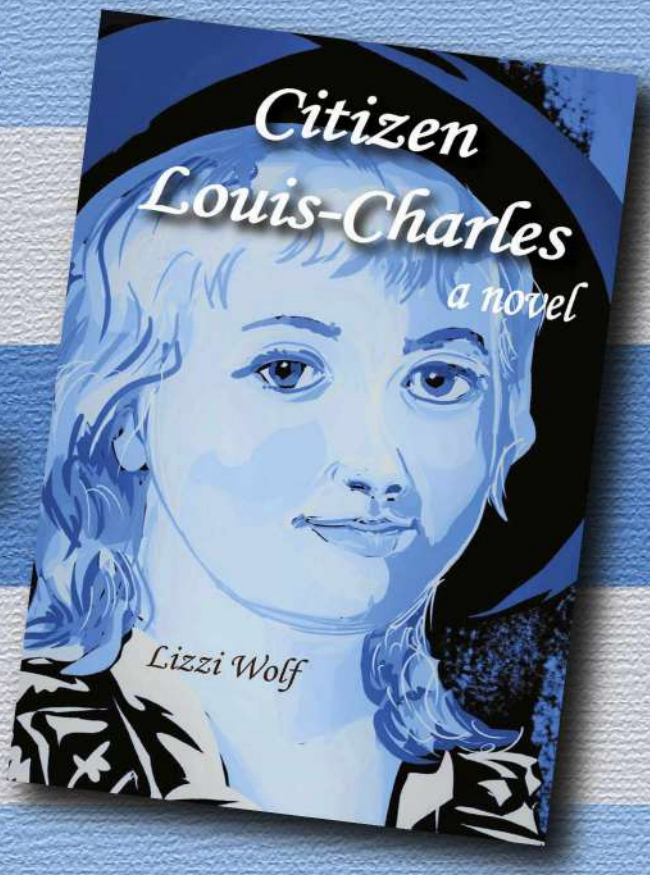

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BBC at 100 PART 13

The digital age

Smart ideas
From the development of the BBC Micro computer (top) in the 1980s to the launch of the BBC News iPhone app (above) in 2010 and later innovations, the corporation has pioneered the use of digital technology to "inform, educate and entertain"

"A thousand initiatives bloomed in the mid-1990s as BBC staff began to explore the internet and create web pages of their own"

The technological innovations of the 1980s and 1990s enabled the BBC to bring audiences fresh content via new platforms. Yet, as **DAVID HENDY** explores in the final episode of his series charting the national broadcaster's history, the rapidly changing media world also poses a threat to the future of the corporation

The playwright David Hare wrote recently that, alongside the NHS and the welfare state, the BBC represents "the finest expression of mid-20th-century public idealism". Yet, from our vantage point in the third decade of the 21st century, such praise can be a dangerous thing. It associates the BBC with past glories: the analogue era, "old media", the world of radio and television. This raises a profound existential question for an organisation marking its 100th birthday. Having emerged in the first wireless age, can it survive in anything like its current form in the era of internet, mobile social media and high-spending multinational streaming giants?

Before reaching for the most pessimistic answer, it's worth remembering that the BBC kick-started Britain's own media revolution in the first place. In the early 1980s, the corporation's education department, alert to warnings of a shortage in computing skills, began working with colleagues in research and development, and with scientists employed by Acorn, to develop what became the BBC Micro. A personal computer designed to be both cheap and easy to use, the Micro – with its distinctive chunky keyboard and orange function keys – became a fixture in homes and classrooms. It enabled tens of thousands of adults and children with no previous computing experience to learn the so-called Basic programming language. And it was just one part of a wider computer literacy project built around TV programmes, instructional books and a support network for teachers.

This multi-pronged approach provided the template for another BBC project launched a decade later, focused this time on introducing the British public to the then-unfamiliar joys of the internet. *The Net* was a TV series that created "live" dialogue with its audience by setting up online bulletin boards and an email address. A "BBC Networking Club" also sprang up to help viewers get online. By this stage, the corporation's own programme-makers were also starting to connect to the world wide web. In large part this was thanks to one of its engineers, Brandon Butterworth, who had created an internal network of desktop computers and secured a website domain: bbc.co.uk.

A thousand initiatives bloomed in the mid-1990s as staff throughout the corporation began to explore the internet and create web pages of their own. In one corner, the Hungarian Service created its own pages to accompany programmes; in another, "Trumptonshire Web" sprang up to celebrate the children's TV series, *Trumpton*. Radio 1 created a live chat facility, and the recently launched news-and-sport network Five Live turned its *606* phone-in for football fans into one of the busiest messageboards in the country. Then, for the May 1997 general election, journalists came up with an 8,000-page site to provide up-to-date details of the results as they came in.

Blazing a trail

Initially this digital evolution was all rather organic and spontaneous, but in 1997 there was a decisive intervention from the top. The BBC's director general, John Birt, had been talking to Nicholas Negroponte, author of *Being Digital*. This book had set out a striking techno-utopian vision of the future in which an "information superhighway" would deliver entirely virtual newspapers and personalised forms of entertainment to millions of private computers. After flying to the US to visit companies engaged with this new technology, including Netscape and Microsoft, Birt returned a fully fledged convert. He was, he said, convinced that the internet "was a Very Big Thing that was going to change the world, and that the BBC had to be at the centre of it".

Over the next six months, all of the experimental work which had been simmering away was pulled together into a slicker,

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

Poll position
David Dimbleby commands the studio during the May 1997 general election, when BBC journalists created an 8,000-page website providing blow-by-blow updates on events and results

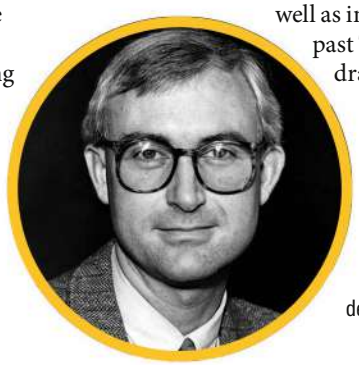
A century of the BBC
Catch up on previous articles in this series marking the corporation's centenary: *historyextra.com/history-bbc*

more-coherent offering. The first tangible outcome of this concerted effort was supposed to be the autumn launch of an online news service. The sudden death of Princess Diana at the end of August forced the pace: this was the kind of dramatic, fast-moving and increasingly complicated story that required web pages to be constantly updated. Presented with an unending supply of fresh interviews on radio and TV, BBC journalists began experimenting with embedding short "grabs" of audio and video. They created a tribute site, and arranged a live "webcast" for the princess's funeral. The success of that coverage prompted an injection of extra cash for new servers and, when BBC News Online was launched formally later in the autumn, it had the capacity to stream the day's main television news bulletins on a regular basis. The BBC's other online services quickly adopted a similar multimedia style.

Birt subsequently claimed that producing video-on-demand had been his "obsession" all along. If so, the launch of the BBC iPlayer 10 years later marked the first real step towards what he'd seen as the ultimate destination of the digital revolution: the merging of TV, radio and the internet into a single platform.

The evolutionary origins of the BBC iPlayer can perhaps be discerned in a development of 1996, when programme-makers at Radio 1 created a virtual mixing desk that allowed anyone anywhere in the world to "listen again" to an archive of recent broadcasts. Six years later, a group of technologically adventurous BBC staff came up with the idea of creating something similar for TV. Ben Lavender, a young engineer in the BBC's New Media Technology department, took up the challenge of turning what he called an "internet personal video recorder" into what became iPlayer.

The technological obstacles proved more straightforward to overcome than the political ones. Senior staff at the BBC needed lots of convincing: many of them refused to believe that anyone would ever want to watch TV on a computer screen or mobile phone. Once they were satisfied, regulators then demanded a "public value test". This was the opportunity for commercial rivals to argue that the proposed new BBC service would damage their own interests. When it was finally launched to the public at Christmas 2007, the BBC's original ambitions for iPlayer – which included sharing the platform with ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5, as well as including whole "box sets" of past TV series – had been drastically trimmed back.



BBC director general John Birt, who claimed that producing video-on-demand had been his "obsession" – sparking the development of the BBC iPlayer

BBC ARCHIVES/TOPFOTO

Nevertheless, iPlayer brought the concept of catch-up TV to the British public. Here was something stable, easily navigated and gloriously free from advertising. By 2012, it was voted the UK's number-one brand. As the chief executive of the streaming giant Netflix later admitted, if anything had "blazed the trail" for his own company's success it was iPlayer. And together with BBC Online, iPlayer showed that – even in a media future dominated by the internet, always-on mobile phones and new social platforms – the BBC might retain a centre-stage role.

Alchemical advances

There was rarely a single "eureka" moment in this story of invention. Rather, a complex, almost alchemical mix of factors enabled the BBC to take its leading role: a depth and range of skill and experience on its payroll that allowed for what one insider called "nippy, smart people working around the edges trying things out"; the spending power that came with a licence fee still keeping pace with inflation; and, above all, a capacity for long-term thinking – and a tolerance of failure as a vital component of innovation – that contrasted with the private sector's nervousness over untested, potentially unprofitable investments.

In this sense, the part played by the BBC in the digital revolution merely reflects its wider role over the past century. This is a role nurtured by those founding figures – John Reith and his lieutenants – who first set it on its path in 1922. For them, the BBC was never

about creating a nation of radio listeners or, later, TV viewers. It was about helping to spread "'the best that has been thought and known in the world" to as many people as possible. Radio or television were merely the means of delivering this larger ethical vision. The goal ever since has been to employ whichever medium seems most effective for this purpose at any given moment. It was also crucial to use the corporation's privileged position as a publicly funded body, beyond direct state control or the pressures wrought by ratings-driven advertising, to provide that famous triumvirate of "information, education and entertainment".

Future challenges

Whether the BBC will retain this capacity in years to come is less clear. There's no intrinsic reason why it shouldn't be capable of continued technological agility. The success of Radio 1 in becoming "the most subscribed-to radio station on YouTube" is a reminder that the BBC is by no means wedded to the old FM dial – or, indeed, the terrestrial TV signal – in its efforts to reach large and youthful audiences. Economists even suggest that, as an "investor of first resort", the BBC stimulates a virtuous circle from which the whole media sector benefits.

Yet the outsourcing of so much of its work now threatens the reservoir of know-how that enabled it to be a creative power house in the first place. The freezing of the licence fee for most of the period since 2010 is also having a devastating effect on its ability to invest for the future. And new technology brings its own dangers. The much-touted switch from a universal funding mechanism to a subscription service would restrict the BBC's riches to those who could afford to pay. It would be the one technological innovation that might end for good what David Hare saw as the BBC's extraordinary aim of shaping for the better the life not just of individuals but of an entire nation. H

David Hendy is emeritus professor of media and cultural history at the University of Sussex. His most recent book is *The BBC: A People's History* (Profile, 2022)

For more milestones in the BBC's first century, check out the **BBC 100** website: *bbc.co.uk/100*

Six of the best

They may not be the most famous, but these TV and radio programmes embody the spirit and ambition of the BBC over the past century, says David Hendy

▲ IN TOWN TONIGHT 1933
The BBC featured entertainment from the start, but it was the launch of *In Town Tonight* in 1933 that truly announced the arrival of a new, confident age of popular variety at the corporation. The show's mix of guest interviews and live stunts, all delivered in a slick, chatty style, provided the template for our now-familiar fun-packed Saturday night TV schedule.

▲ Z CARS 1962
When Sydney Newman took over the reins of BBC TV drama and launched The Wednesday Play in 1964, *Z Cars* provided his inspiration. It depicted the rough-and-tumble of ordinary men and women serving in a northern police force, with the restless visual style of a documentary. It was gritty and dark, and showed messy, complex lives. As its writer, John McGrath, explained, "the cops were incidental".

◀ WOMAN'S HOUR 1946
There had already been plenty of programmes for women, but *Woman's Hour*, which began in 1946, offered more than the traditional mix of fashion and housekeeping. It covered social issues, politics, the menopause and more. The aim, its producers said, was to take listeners beyond the four walls of the home. It refused to see domestic topics and public affairs as mutually exclusive, and it paved the way for programmes such as Radio 4's long-running *Today*.

▲ TOP GEAR 1967
No, not the TV series about cars – rather, the Radio 1 programme that launched the BBC career of John Peel. The show established the Reithian approach to music Peel displayed over the following 37 years: introducing listeners to sounds they had little chance of hearing anywhere else on British radio.

BBC ARCHIVES/GETTY/ALAMY

▲ GRANDSTAND 1958
The BBC's flagship sports show has been described as "the all-encompassing behemoth of sport on television". For nearly five decades, *Grandstand* demonstrated the technical mastery and reach of the BBC's outside broadcast operation for several hours every Saturday afternoon, leaving millions of viewers with indelible memories of great sporting moments.

SMALL AXE 2020 ▶
This anthology of five films directed by Steve McQueen powerfully captured the experience of black Britons – and the decades of institutional racism they've endured. By placing these films in the Sunday evening slot usually reserved for cosy television drama, the BBC showed its willingness to make the perspective of marginalised communities part of our shared national story.

IT WOULDN'T BE
Christmas
WITHOUT
RadioTimes
ON SALE FROM 10 DECEMBER
#ChristmasRadioTimes
RadioTimes

THE FACEMAKER
LINDSEY FITZHARRIS
WINTERS IN THE WORLD
WINTERS IN THE WORLD
THE ESCAPE ARTIST
JONATHAN FREEDLAND

FRAN MONKS

2022 BOOKS OF THE YEAR

This has been a vintage year for history books that illuminate the past and help us make sense of the present. Historians **Rana Mitter, Catherine Nixey** and **Michael Wood** joined us to discuss their favourite reads

INTERVIEW BY **RHIANNON DAVIES**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **FRAN MONKS**

OUR PANEL OF EXPERT HISTORIANS

Rana Mitter is professor of the history and politics of modern China at the University of Oxford. He is also one of the presenters of *Free Thinking* on BBC Radio 3

Catherine Nixey is a classicist and a writer for *The Economist*. She is the author of *The Darkening Age* (Macmillan, 2017)

Michael Wood is a broadcaster and professor of public history at the University of Manchester. His latest book is a revised edition of *In Search of the Dark Ages* (BBC Books, 2022)

Rhiannon Davies: Some excellent books have hit the shelves this year. Which popular history book would you put forward as the best of 2022?

Michael Wood: I think the best that I've come across is ❶ **Winters in the World** by Eleanor Parker. Some people might think that it's a rather niche subject: it covers the year in Anglo-Saxon England, taking you through the months and the festivals. But when we study history, we really hope to hear the voices of the people of the past. And Parker gives us those voices here – providing a very moving projection into their world. It's also a very ecological book, in some ways, because of course it's about the seasons and those people's conviction that things would never change – that this is the unchanging rhythm of life on Earth. As a portrait of the psychology of our ancestors 1,000 years ago, I found it really touching.

Rana Mitter: I've been really impressed by ❷ **Horizons: A Global History of Science** by James Poskett, who's an associate professor at Warwick University. The book is exactly what it says on the cover: it's a way of looking at the world of science and the development of technology from a genuinely global perspective. The narrative starts with the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan [on the site of modern-day Mexico City] and the engineering marvels that were present there, built long before the Spanish turned up during their conquest in the early modern era. Poskett also discusses Arab science, Chinese science and the story of science in the west, which is better known. So it's a truly global and really well-written and engaging account.

Catherine Nixey: I'd put forward ❸ **Magnificent Rebels** by Andrea Wulf. It's about a small German town called Jena, which became the intellectual heart of Enlightenment Europe when large numbers of German intellectuals turned up there. They started making friends with each other and having affairs; falling out with each other catastrophically and at length; and, above all, furiously writing to each other. There are figures such as the scientist and explorer Alexander von Humboldt, who was electrocuting frogs' legs, and Goethe, who was writing plays. At the same time, the French Revolution was lapping at the edges of the town, creating this enormous tension.

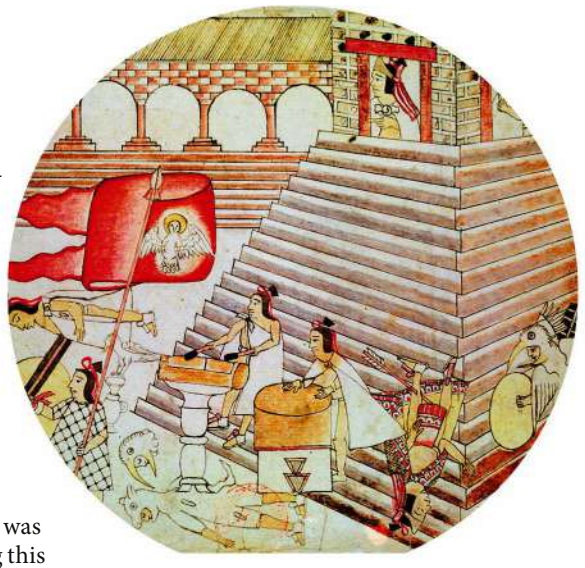
It reminds you of the way that intellectual movements arise and develop. You typically think of a single person beavering away in their study, but in fact it's a group effort – various people coming together and sparking off each other.

RD: Are there any books in your specialist areas that you'd highlight as being particularly impressive?

RM: I'm going to nominate a book in my field – Chinese history – by a very brilliant young historian called Julian Gewirtz. His new book, ❹ **Never Turn Back**, is about the era of Zhao Ziyang – a name that used to be at the centre of what you might call the contemporary era of Chinese history, the 1980s. When leader of China, he stood with the students in Tiananmen Square, Beijing in 1989, and he gave them a rather bleak message: "I've come too late." He was then whisked off and kept under house arrest for the rest of his life. He died in 2005.

Gewirtz has taken a whole variety of materials – which were shared through "underground sources", you might say, and then made public – that look at the contribution of Zhao Ziyang to the creation of China's market economy in the 1980s.

This might sound like a dry subject but, first of all, Gewirtz really brings to life the intellectual atmosphere of China in the 1980s. This was a time when the free-market economist Milton Friedman visited China; he was literally barricaded into his hotel room because so many communists were outraged by what he was trying to do. Zhao Ziyang walked a path between being a very dedicated member of the Communist Party and also seeing how



FRAN MONKS/GETTY IMAGES

Ancient wonders
Aztec warriors defend the Temple of Tenochtitlan against Conquistadors. Such engineering marvels are discussed in a new global history of science

Lost leader Chinese leader Zhao Ziyang (centre) addresses protesters in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, 1989. Rana Mitter praises a new book that brings the purged politician "back to proper historical prominence"

markets could be brought back into the way that China operated.

These days, people say that Deng Xiaoping – perhaps one of the most famous names of modern China – was the person who brought market economics back to China after the era of Mao's Cultural Revolution, and there's some truth to that. But the name that everyone's forgetting, because he was purged, is Zhao Ziyang. Gewirtz's book brings him back to proper historical prominence.

MW: It's a really fantastic story, isn't it? It does make you wonder whether there were other paths possible for China at that point – and whether there still are other paths possible.

RM: Certainly, Zhao Ziyang himself – though not someone who believed in a multi-party type of liberal democracy – was absolutely an advocate of a more open China in which anything could be debated, including democratic systems. Today's China has provided a much narrower space for that kind of intellectual debate.

RD: We've witnessed some huge news events during 2022: Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the death of Queen Elizabeth II and the ongoing climate emergency, to give just a few examples. How can this year's history books help us make sense of our modern world?

CN: I write about the royals for *The Economist,* and one book I'm interested to read is Valentine Low's 5 **Courtiers**. It's about one central question: who is behind this family? Around the royal carriage there are fleets of people trying to guide everything, which actually makes the mistakes that get made all the more surprising.

RM: Catherine's mention of the royals reminds me of emperors. I think that Dominic Lieven's 6 **In the Shadow of the Gods** is a really interesting way into some of those questions about Russia, Ukraine and China. Lieven is a specialist on Russia, based at the London School of Economics, but his book has a wider sweep. It looks at Russian tsars, Chinese emperors and the wider imperial mindset.

In the wake of 24 February 2022 [the day when Russia invaded Ukraine], understanding that imperial mindset has become much more important. One of the things that empires do is find ways to incorporate land, and to legitimise and justify themselves in that incorporation in a way that is different from the world of nation states.

We've got used to the idea that you have bounded territories – you have essentially republican forms or constitutional monarchies. But it's notable that in attempting to justify the invasion of Ukraine, one of the arguments that Russia has used very strongly is the idea that, culturally, people in eastern Ukraine, who speak Russian, should be considered part of a Russian empire – even though, in national terms, recognised boundaries mean that they're not in Russia. Lieven's book gives a fantastic historical perspective on why emperors have been so important in the context of broader Eurasia.

RD: Continuing to think about empires, ahead of this conversation both Rana and Michael nominated Caroline Elkins' 7 *Legacy of Violence: A History of the British*

> **"Studying the imperial mindset and the history of emperors is a really interesting way into some of the questions about Russia and Ukraine"**
>
> RANA MITTER

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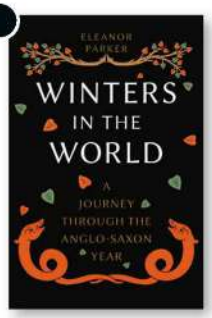

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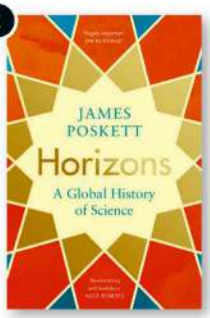

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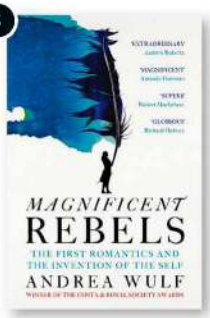

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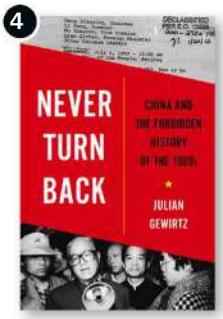

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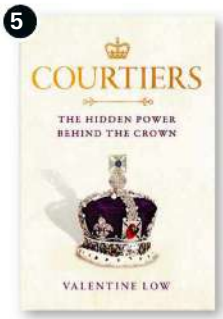

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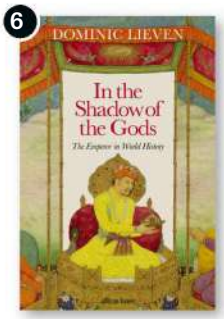

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Violent times Suspected rebels in Kenya are guarded by British troops during the Mau Mau uprising, 1953. Caroline Elkins' latest book highlights the violence of the empire

***Empire*. What was it that drew you both to this book?**

MW: There's a huge debate over the British empire, slavery and the violence of the empire, into which Elkins' book taps. I'm one of many people who, for more than 20 years, have been arguing that the British empire should be put at the heart of the curriculum in schools, because it is the thing that unifies us. Whatever your background, wherever your ancestors came from – that's the thing that binds us together. And, as a society, we have really failed to acknowledge what the empire did.

Everywhere the empire went, violence determined the nature of things. Indian historians are now looking seriously at this, and many British historians are, too. People are starting to face up to the fact that the British empire was, like all empires, essentially violent. We have lived for so long with the idea that, although things sometimes went wrong – such as in the case of the Amritsar massacre [when troops under British command opened fire on a crowd of unarmed Indian people in 1919, killing several hundred and wounding hundreds more] – essentially, the British empire was benign. We haven't faced up to its reality, and that's now what people such as Elkins are looking at. It's proving a very difficult conversation, isn't it?

RM: *Legacy of Violence* is a pretty comprehensive history – it goes all the way back to the 18th century, although it mostly concentrates on the 20th century. But it should be considered as part of a spectrum of reading that looks at the centrality of violence and coercion in understanding how the empire worked. So I'd add another book that is not so much a history book as a book of historical significance.

This title, which provides an interesting contrast and which perhaps shows another side of the story, is **8 The Hong Kong Diaries** by Chris Patten, the last colonial governor of that territory. His diaries make for a wickedly witty read, because he seems not to have censored himself too much in terms of what he thinks of both the Chinese – with whom he was interacting during negotiations about the future of Hong Kong at the time he wrote them – and also his own British parliamentary colleagues.

Another clear part of that legacy is the very difficult interaction between the reality of being a colonial governor and recognising the need for things such as free media and holding debates in schools about the legacy of colonialism. Patten is absolutely clear that the violence through which Hong Kong was obtained in 1842 is not something that should be forgiven or forgotten. In the end, Patten's central point is that the freedoms that were evident in Hong Kong for about 20 years before the handover and 20 years afterwards were the products of Chinese people's interactions – they were not just a gift from the British.

RD: These books might all be considered examples of the genre of hidden histories. As well as stories connected to colonialism, we've also seen books highlighting the lives of women lost in the historical record. What books on this theme would you recommend?

CN: I'd say Selby Wynn Schwartz's novel **9 After Sappho**. I love Sappho [an ancient Greek poet from the island of Lesbos, who had female lovers]. Reading her poetry is like walking past a door that's just slightly ajar. Most of Sappho's work has been lost – it was considered pretty racy by centuries of people, and generally wasn't copied out with the care that it deserved. So if you look at a Sappho poem, it mainly looks like a page sprinkled with pepper: it's dot, dot, dot, dot, dot, word, dot, dot, dot.

Her poetry makes for a very fast read, but it's incredibly beautiful – the bits that are there, at least. You can see why everybody loved Sappho, and why [the Roman poet] Catullus imitated her, taking her poems and working them into his. For centuries, she was respected in a way that was quite unusual for a woman from the ancient Greek world.

After Sappho looks at the lives of various women, particularly writers and artists. It starts in Italy in the late 19th century, then moves into the 20th century, when it touches on Virginia Woolf. It shares these women's

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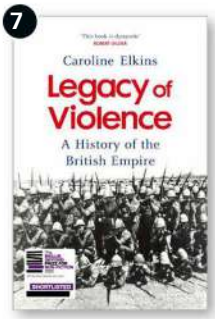

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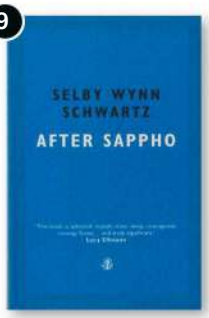

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stories in a sapphic way – in both senses. Lots of them had relationships with women, but it's also sapphic in the sense that it shows snippets of these women's lives, just as we only have fragments of Sappho's poetry today.

It's a fractured history: you get a shaft of light illuminating one bit of someone's life, then it's gone; there's another, then that, too, is gone. The writing is just wonderful – it has these heavenly, soaring moments when you think: "That's an absolutely lovely phrase."

MW: I wrote a book 40 years ago called **10 In Search of the Dark Ages**, which was a series of biographies from the Anglo-Saxon past – and I confess guiltily that it featured only one woman, I think. I published a new version this year, including five more chapters that are about women. I saw it as a challenge, because a recent bestseller on the Anglo-Saxons said that it's not possible to write the biographies of women in the Dark Ages. But it is. It requires a lot of effort, and a lot of scrutiny of the sources in different ways, but you can do it.

RD: What are some of the other big trends you've noticed in publishing?

CN: One of the things I've noticed is a trend for books that concentrate on groups. I mentioned *Magnificent Rebels,* looking at a group of people in Germany. But there are lots of other books diving into a world that was exciting at the time. Daisy Dunn – another classicist – has written one, **11 Not Far From Brideshead: Oxford Between the Wars**. It looks at the period when Evelyn Waugh [the author of the 1945 novel *Brideshead Revisited*] was in the city, as well as lots of the great classical scholars. You can pick out characters who then turn up in *Brideshead* – there's somebody who carries a teddy bear, rampant misbehaviour, the drinking societies. In historical periods, there are moments when you get this flowering of really interesting people all in one place. You wonder: was that just chance, or were they stimulating other people to think better, write better, do more?

> **"A recent bestseller on the Anglo-Saxons said it's not possible to write the biographies of women in the Dark Ages. It is tricky, but it can be done"**
> MICHAEL WOOD

RM: There are always books of this sort, but in 2022 I've seen a bit of a trend for people writing big-scale re-examinations of topics that perhaps we thought we knew. Remember *1066 and All That*, the parody of British history by WC Sellar and RJ Yeatman, published in 1930? Well, this year I really enjoyed Judith A Green's **12 The Normans**, which also looks at "1066 and all that". Her book explains it to people like me who could recite the year but, if pressed, would have to admit that perhaps their knowledge of the details of what happened were rather limited.

One of the interesting things is that Green places the Normans in a huge European context. In particular, she writes about the Normans in Sicily, which doesn't necessarily link in the popular mind to that very English story.

MW: I think people are taking a lot of different perspectives at the moment. The big trends are, as we've mentioned, the hidden histories – the people who never spoke. And a whole new historiography is erupting now. Take something like the history of Jamaica, and the rebellions of enslaved people there. For years our representation of these events has been conditioned by the victors telling us what happened, so it's not the real story. But now the real voices are starting to come out, with different sources such as the amazing slave archive at UCL [the online Encyclopaedia of British Slave-ownership], which is a really brilliant resource.

Storming Sicily A mosaic adorning the Norman Palace in Sicily. In her new book, Judith A Green explores the Norman conquest of the island

RD: Is there still an appetite for traditional blockbusters looking at topics such as the Second World War?

CN: Most definitely. Books on the Second World War still shoot right to the top of the bestseller lists. One of the titles I enjoyed this year was Ben Macintyre's **13 Colditz**. It's great fun – Macintyre's books about the Second World War are always romps: they're always entertaining, and he always describes the characters very deftly. *Colditz* is full of French prisoners spring-boarding over the castle walls and then walking for hundreds of miles.

But there's also a much more sinister side to it. One of the things that you don't hear about so much is the relationships between the prisoners, which could be pretty shocking. Many French prisoners said that they didn't want to be billeted with the Jewish

Ancient wordsmith
A Roman-era bust of the ancient Greek poet Sappho, whose life and work partly inspired the 2022 novel *After Sappho*

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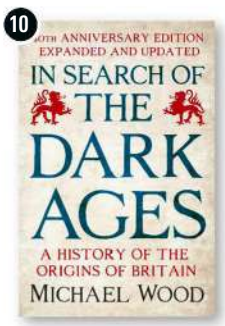

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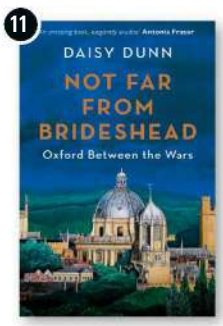

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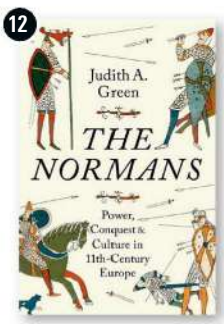

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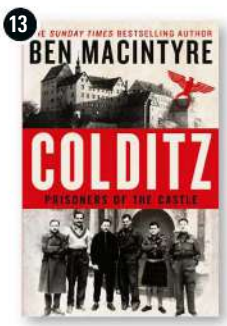
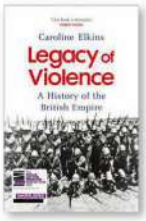


MORE TOP PICKS FROM 2022

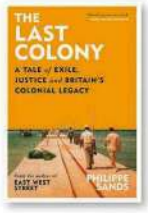
Four experts highlight some of their favourite new works of history and historical fiction

Olivette Otele

For centuries, volumes about the history of the transatlantic slave trade focused on European abolitionism. But this has changed in recent decades, with scholarship concentrating on American and Caribbean emancipation movements and key figures. In **Lourenço da Silva Mendonça and the Black Atlantic Abolitionist Movement in the Seventeenth Century**, José Lingna Nafafé examines the trajectory of an abolitionist prince who spearheaded the legal battle and debates about emancipating Jewish people, indigenous Americans and black Christians in the 17th century.



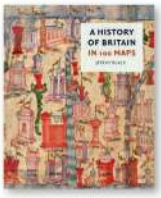
Nafafé's outstanding volume underlines a long history of brutality that echoes Caroline Elkins' **Legacy of Violence**. Elkins' sharp analysis explores how violence became a useful tool for the British empire. The book successfully examines how physical, cultural and even archival violence were practices that have been carefully curated and transmitted from one generation to another.



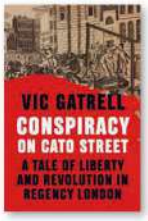
The price paid by those who resisted the British empire was exemplified by the controversial decision to expel islanders from the Chagos Archipelago, a British Overseas Territory in the Indian Ocean, from the late 1960s. In **The Last Colony** human rights lawyer Philippe Sands shares a troubling and profoundly humane account of the islanders' battle to return. It highlights the difficulties faced by those who simply wished to live in a peaceful manner, in a world where the legacies of Britain's colonial past are still highly disputed. H

Olivette Otele is a historian and the author of *African Europeans* (Hurst, 2020)

Andrew Roberts



Jeremy Black's **A History of Britain in 100 Maps** is a beautifully produced and very well-written exposition of what the gems of the British Library's hugely extensive map collection can tell us about our history over the past thousand years. The range of charts covered goes from before the Mappa Mundi – the vast map of the then-known world created in the 13th century and now held in Hereford Cathedral – all the way up to the current Covid-19 pandemic. Black takes us through scores of maps, all sumptuously illustrated, showing how useful they are in helping us understand the past.



Vic Gatrell's **Conspiracy on Cato Street** explores in gripping detail the plot of February 1820 to assassinate the whole cabinet and start a revolution the year after the Peterloo massacre. Gatrell sympathises as much as possible with the desperation the doomed plotters felt that drove them to such a decision. The plot was the most murderous for over two centuries – since the gunpowder plot – and here finds its perfect historian.

Owen Matthews' superb book **Overreach: The Inside Story of Putin's War Against Ukraine** explores how Vladimir Putin came to the near-insane decision to invade Ukraine. He explains it largely in terms of the growth in power of ultra-nationalist ideologues around the dictator, just as Putin himself embraced an appallingly skewed view of Russian history. It is a true page-turner that has clearly cost the author friends, and will be used by all serious writers on the current Russo-Ukrainian War as the first draft of its history. H

Andrew Roberts is a historian whose latest book is *The Chief* (Simon & Schuster, 2022)

Helen Carr

The imposing cathedrals that pepper Europe are treasure troves of history, but they are also crucibles of human stories. In **Heaven on Earth**, Emma J Wells flexes her scholarly expertise by shining a light on the histories of 16 great European cathedrals and the people who built them. Her storytelling combines carefully crafted, accessible information on the architectural technicalities of these edifices with animated prose, considerate of how people in the past expressed deep-rooted spirituality through magnificent physical form.

I greatly enjoyed Dan Jones' **Essex Dogs**. This is his first foray into novels – and he's taken the move in his stride, producing an epic piece of unputdownable historical fiction. The book encapsulates the lesser-known guerrilla-style warfare that took place during the first stage of the Hundred Years' War. The story is told through the eyes of the "Essex Dogs", a mercenary band of brothers who took part in the 1346 campaign under Edward III that culminated in the battle of Crécy. You feel the filth on your skin and the fear of the sword in this first instalment of Jones' hotly anticipated trilogy.

Finally, I'd nominate **Fierce Appetites** by Elizabeth Boyle. This raw, revealing and frequently laugh-out-loud funny memoir artfully weaves Boyle's own darkest experiences with her scholarship on early medieval Irish prose. She speaks candidly of addiction and motherhood, and explores how these human experiences appear in Irish mythology: ancient and dark but also utterly dazzling. H

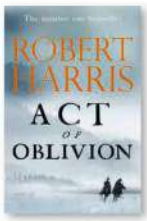
Helen Carr is a historian, writer and producer. Her latest book is *The Red Prince* (Oneworld, 2021)

HELEN ATKINSON

Nick Rennison

Few historical novels this year are as ambitious and as absorbing as **Booth** by American writer Karen Joy Fowler, rightly longlisted for the Booker Prize. This saga of the dynasty that produced both America's greatest 19th-century actor and a presidential assassin builds slowly towards the climactic moment when John Wilkes Booth shoots Abraham Lincoln. In a work of great depth and imagination, Fowler provides an epic depiction of a nation and a family divided.

Frances Quinn's **That Bonesetter Woman** is much lighter than Fowler's book but no less engaging. Quinn's unlikely heroine, Endurance "Durie" Proudfoot, arrives in Georgian London intent on making her way as a bonesetter. Despite the obstacles put in her way by male doctors envious of her skill, and distractions provided by an unscrupulous seducer out to defraud her, she refuses to be beaten in an uplifting, thoroughly enjoyable tale of an underdog biting back.



The arrival of a new novel by Robert Harris is always worth celebrating, and **Act of Oblivion** is no exception. Set in the 1660s and 1670s, it follows the fortunes of two regicides, Edward Whalley and William Goffe, both signatories to Charles I's death warrant in 1649. In flight from the dubious justice of the restored Charles II, they exile themselves to colonial America – but one dogged investigator is determined to track them down. Harris's historical thriller summons up a convincing past with his usual skill and inventiveness. H

Nick Rennison is the author of *1922: Scenes from a Turbulent Year* (Oldcastle Books, 2021)

GETTY IMAGES

Rome in a way Via Appia, begun in 312 BC, is one of the earliest roads built by the Roman republic. Catherine Nixey issues a plea for works on practical aspects of the ancient world: "finding good books on Roman roads is quite difficult"

French prisoners. So even when revisiting these well-known tales, there's a less-well-known tale underneath.

MW: There's no end to Second World War books, is there? Friends of mine write them, and they're incredibly successful. But there is this almost unhealthy obsession, I think, with the Second World War, and it seems like we lap it up because we can't shake it off. Even at the Queen's funeral, militarism and empire still shadowed that event. But maybe it's true of all societies – maybe you need these stories to create cohesion and allegiance.

RM: It's clear that the Second World War holds an extraordinarily dominant position. Having said that, I'm also guilty of having written the odd book on it myself, at least in the Asian context. But I was thinking of a recent book, Richard Overy's *Blood and Ruins* [published in 2021], which does tie together some of the themes we're talking about today, in that it looks at the Second World War as a war of empire and of empires. It looks at the Japanese empire in comparison with the European empires such as the British and French, which is one of the things that tends not to happen with the big overview books. So, though I think it's becoming harder to do, even now blockbusters can offer new viewpoints.

RD: So far, we've discussed books that you've admired. On the flip side, what topics or themes did you feel were underrepresented this year?

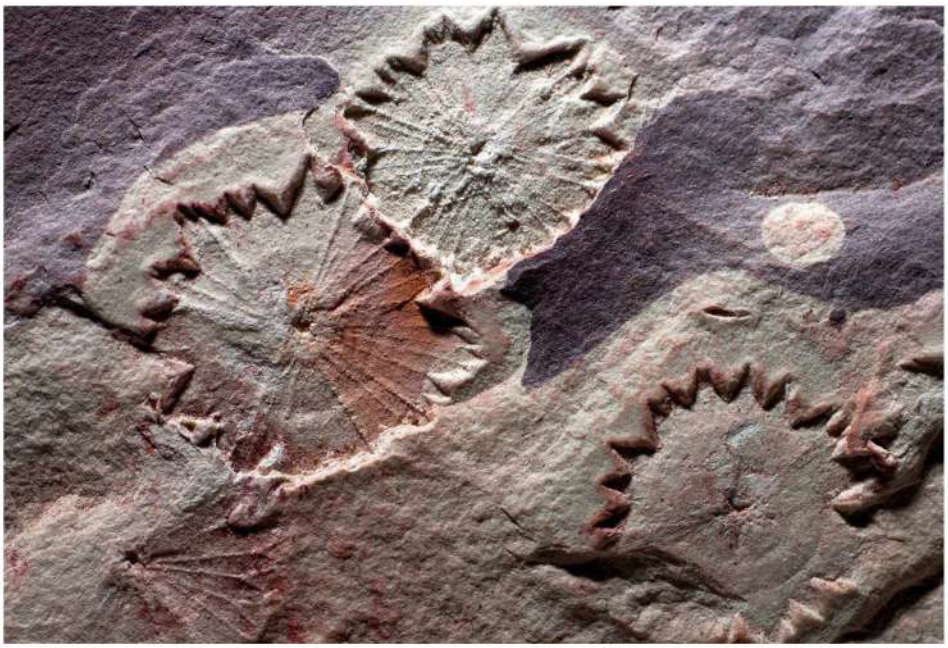
CN: Something I'd love to see more of – and this is pure selfishness – are nitty-gritty books about engineering and other practical aspects of the ancient world. For instance, I was trying to research Roman roads – and that's one thing we all know about the Romans: that they had those long, straight roads. But actually finding good books on Roman roads, detailing how much they sped up the empire and how they facilitated travel – how the volumes of people and trade increased – is quite difficult.

I would love to see somebody quantitatively approach empires. You get so much from a numerical approach that just telling the stories doesn't give you. For instance, somebody did a study on Roman emperors, and found that their life expectancy was quite a lot shorter than your average Roman, which was quite short anyway. These things can illuminate a period in a way that narrative history can't.

> **"I'd love to see more nitty-gritty books about the ancient world. Looking at the numbers illuminates this period in a way that sharing stories can't"**
>
> CATHERINE NIXEY

MW: If I were thinking about my own interests, in the past 20 years there have been disappointingly few English-language titles on pre-Mughal India. Yet India is among the biggest countries in the world, and the region hosted probably the oldest civilisation, if you count back to the ancient towns in Balochistan. We get a lot of great stuff on the Mughals –

How did Homer perform the *Iliad*?
Find out by listening to the full Books of the Year discussion on our podcast: *historyextra.com/podcast*



Brave old world Ancient fossil impressions in Australia. Thomas Halliday brings organisms like these to life in *Otherlands*, which explores prehistory "as the world grew from protozoic slime"

on the art, the culture, the administration. But if I wanted to read a book about the Guptas or the Cholans, or even going right back to the Indus Valley, I'd struggle.

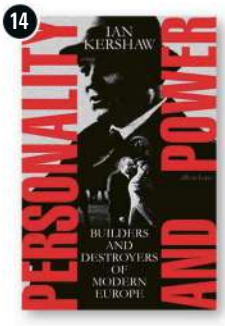
RM: It's worth reflecting for a moment on the conditions needed for these books to exist. Outside the commercial aspect, you also need to be working in a culture that respects learning foreign languages, respects the academic craft of writing history, and then has enough people to pull the threads together to tell a bigger story. When we call for people to write more accessible history, having a bit of appreciation of the bits that have to come together to make that work is worth bearing in mind.

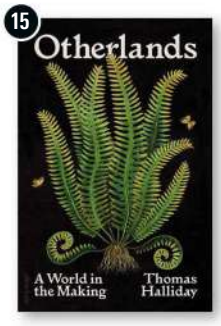
RD: We've discussed books that have impressed you in 2022, but which history titles, that you've not yet read, will be on your Christmas lists?

CN: I'd like to get a copy of Ian Kershaw's 14 **Personality and Power**, which asks

> **"If you speak to young people about the Soviet Union, to them it's a bit like the Babylonian empire – something that existed a very long time ago"**
> RANA MITTER

whether the "Great Man" view of history is accurate. How much is somebody just riding the wave of history, and then saying that they created it? How much are they actually shaping the world? It's something you always wonder, particularly because our historical tradition has so often taken the "Great Man" view. From what I understand about the book, I don't think that Kershaw comes down definitively on one side or the other, but I'm excited to read it.

14 

15 

MW: A book that I really want to read but haven't yet bought – so I hope it goes into my Christmas stocking – is 15 **Otherlands: A World in the Making** by Thomas Halliday. It sounds so amazing – a history of the world before history, before people. He's trying to write the history of the organisms and the plants and the creatures and everything else as the world grows from protozoic slime or whatever we emerged from. It sounds like an absolutely incredible effort of imagination. I think that Christmas presents should be books that you can curl up with and get engrossed in and transported by – and *Otherlands* sounds like exactly that.

RD: We're now leaving 2022 behind and looking to the future. Which 2023 books are you most excited about?

CN: Again, mine's a classical one. Emily Wilson is releasing a new translation of **The Iliad**, which I would love to read. She translated the *Odyssey* before, and it's a real skill. You want to keep the sense that this is an old language, because the *Iliad* was probably written down in 800 BC, but the story dates back to maybe 400 years earlier than that. So it would have felt archaic even in its early days of being written down. To get that feeling of it being other but without feeling "ye olde" is something I think that Wilson does very well. She seasons the old with the modern.

RM: There are a couple of books I'm looking forward to, which I believe are forthcoming nearer the end of 2023. One is going to look in a big-scale way at modern Chinese history. It's written by two really major historians of modern and contemporary China, Odd Arne Westad and Chen Jian. They're going to examine the period from the 1960s and the Cultural Revolution all the way up to the late 1980s. They've had access to all sorts of material that other people haven't had before, and it's going to be a really big-think reassessment – not just of changes in China during that pivotal time, but also how that story fits into what we know about the Cold War world.

That puts in mind a second book, written by Sergey Radchenko, a brilliant historian of Russia, the Soviet Union and China, and Eurasia more broadly. His new book, which I think is going to be called **The First Fiddle**, is a really comprehensive history of the Soviet Union during the Cold War, drawn from Moscow archives that he knows like the back of his hand. There is a huge volume of material there that just hasn't been seen before.

I, for one, can't wait to see that in print, because I think it's going to transform the way that we understand the Soviet Union and the centrality of its history in that period. Those of us who remember the Soviet Union remember what a big deal it was in the world. If you speak to people like my teenage daughter, though, it's a historical phenomenon they're aware of, but it's a bit like the Babylonian empire – it's something that existed a very long time ago. For those of us for whom it was a day-to-day reality – at least in the sense of the wider world – seeing it as a historical object is going to be fascinating. H

SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY

DIARY By **Jonathan Wright, Rhiannon Davies** and **Samantha Nott**
PODCAST **Victorian visions of a renewable future**
EXPLORE **Mithraeum,** London
TRAVEL **Strasbourg,** France

ENCOUNTERS

WATCH

Trust issues

Nicholas Elliott (1916–94) and Kim Philby (1912–88) both worked for the British intelligence services. They were also the closest of friends over many years. And yet, considering that Philby – one of the most infamous double agents of the 20th century and part of the notorious Cambridge spy ring – betrayed his country before fleeing to the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War in 1963, how well did Elliott really know him?

Based on Ben Macintyre's book *A Spy Among Friends: Philby and the Great Betrayal*, a new six-part espionage series dramatises the interlinked lives of the two men. In doing so, it not only touches on themes of trust, loyalty and treachery, but also on how Philby's actions impacted the relationship between the American and British security services – Philby, it's worth remembering, was the most senior British intelligence officer in Washington DC between 1949 and 1951.

Guy Pearce stars as Philby, while Damian Lewis plays Elliott. The strong cast also includes Anna Maxwell Martin, Stephen Kunken and Adrian Edmondson. The series debuts on ITV's new streaming platform, ITVX.

A Spy Among Friends
ITVX / Streaming from early December

Damian Lewis stars as Nicholas Elliott, the MI6 officer betrayed by his friend, the double agent Kim Philby

ITV

VISIT

Dastardly plotters

When choosing an opening date for an exhibition dedicated to treasonous acts in Britain, there was perhaps none more fitting than 5 November. As the nursery rhyme urges us to remember, it was, of course, on this day that Guy Fawkes attempted to blow up parliament in the gunpowder plot.

But the history of treason can be traced back far further than 1605. In the mid-14th century, the Treason Act was first drawn up, detailing what counted as conspiring against the crown – and, thrillingly, an original copy of the act is part of the exhibition. Also on show are pamphlets, letters and trial papers, which showcase some of the most famous treasonous moments of the last 700 years.

Treason: People, Power & Plot
The National Archives, Kew / Until 6 April 2023 / Free entry / *nationalarchives.gov.uk*

JOHN FROST.
£100.
REWARD
The above Reward will be paid to any Person or Persons who shall APPREHEND and bring to Justice JOHN FROST, late of Newport, Draper, who stands charged with the Crime of HIGH TREASON.
BY ORDER OF
The Magistrates.

A wanted poster for John Frost, a leader of the 1839 Newport Rising, who was accused of high treason

David Olusoga presents a new documentary on the history of the Covent Garden Piazza

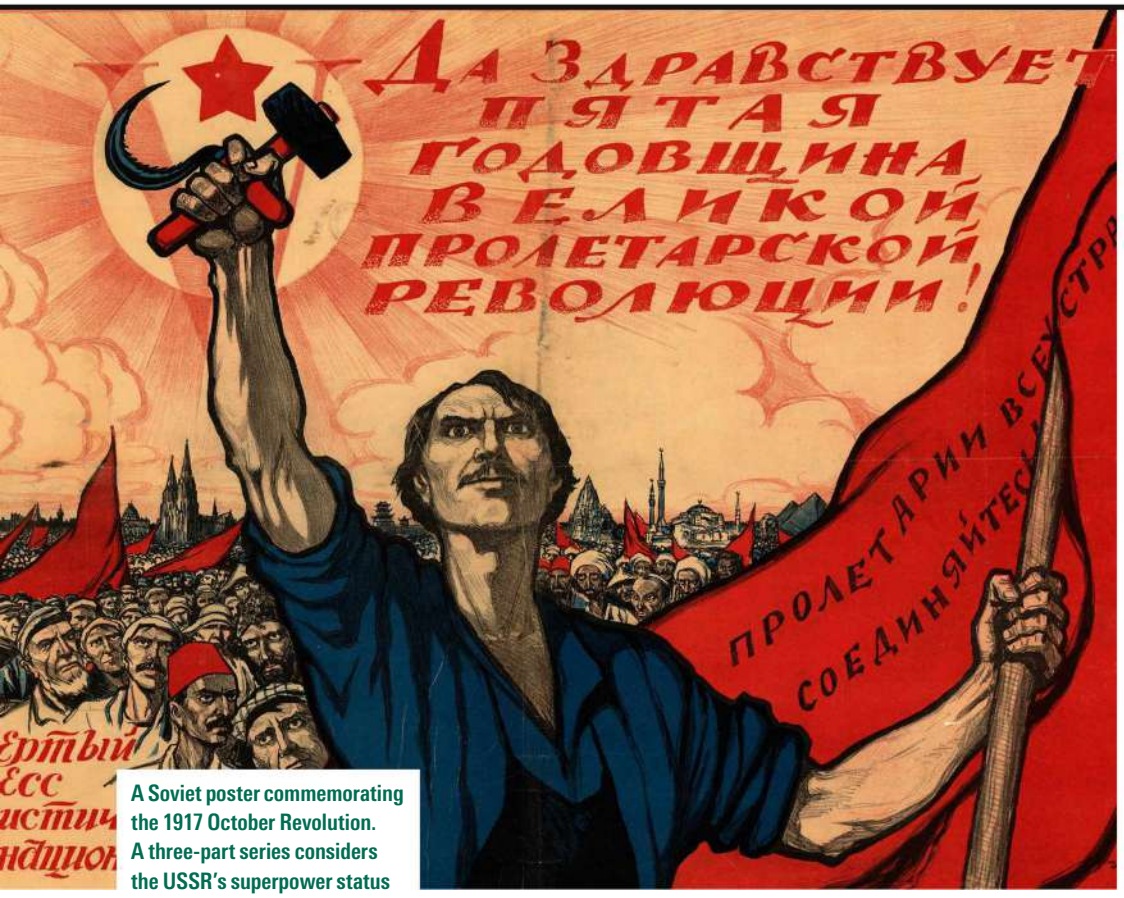
WATCH

London lives

Today, Covent Garden Piazza occupies prime land in a gentrified city. Only the wealthy and the very fortunate live in this part of London – and yet the Piazza itself is a democratic space, somewhere to see street performers, to shop or to stroll. As broadcaster David Olusoga puts it, in the Piazza you can follow in the footsteps of "celebrities and criminals, artists and pioneers, the filthy rich and the starving poor".

All of these groups and more feature in a feature-length documentary, in which Olusoga tells the history of the space. It's a story over 400 years in the making, as the Piazza was designed and laid out as London's first modern square in the early 17th century.

The People's Piazza: A History Of Covent Garden
BBC iPlayer / Streaming now



A Soviet poster commemorating the 1917 October Revolution. A three-part series considers the USSR's superpower status

WATCH

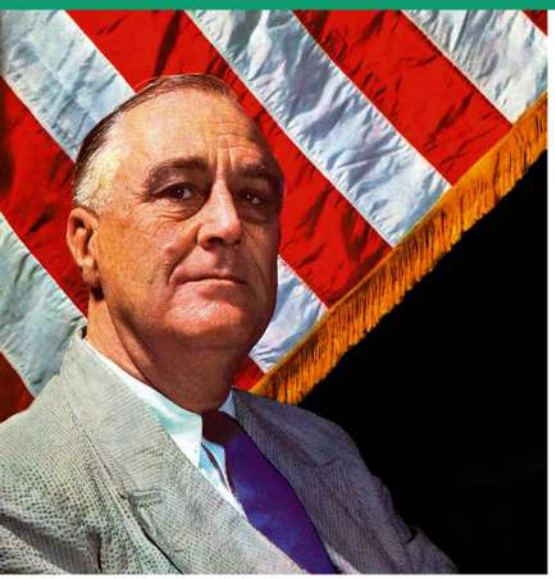
Birth of a superpower

In the wake of the October Revolution in 1917, Russia descended into civil war. By the end of 1922, however, Lenin and the Bolsheviks were confident enough of victory to formalise the creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) – the first socialist state the world had ever seen.

A new three-part series marks this centenary, telling the story of how the USSR became a global superpower at the same time as, all too often, it repressed its own citizens. The series draws on archive films, newsreels and propaganda material. Historians offering their perspectives include Max Hastings and Simon Sebag Montefiore.

The Soviet Union 100th Anniversary
PBS America / Scheduled for Monday 5 to Wednesday 7 December

NATIONAL ARCHIVES/BBC/TOPFOTO



US president Franklin D Roosevelt's landmark 1941 Four Freedoms speech will be explored in the Reith Lectures this month

TOPFOTO/BBC

LISTEN

Big ideas

On 6 January 1941, Franklin D Roosevelt (FDR) gave the annual State of the Union address, one of the great set pieces in the American political year. His address became known as the Four Freedoms speech, after FDR put forward the idea that people around the world should enjoy freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear.

Roosevelt's ideas – which he expressed shortly before the US entered the Second World War – are revisited in this year's Reith Lectures, which annually mark Lord Reith's contribution to public service broadcasting.

Unusually, there are four different speakers this year rather than one: author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie; theologian and former Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Rowan Williams; rapper and social commentator Darren McGarvey; and foreign affairs specialist Dr Fiona Hill, who acted as an advisor to George W Bush, Barack Obama and Donald Trump. They will all reflect on different facets of FDR's arguments.

Williams' theme, for example, is how religious freedom is the basis of political freedom. He also discusses the state of religious freedom around the globe.

The Reith Lectures
BBC Radio 4 and BBC World Service / From Wednesday 30 November

Weekly TV & radio
Visit *historyextra.com* for updates on upcoming TV and radio programmes

HISTORY ON THE BOX

"Isabella was an adventure junkie. She became alive in her body when she was in the wild"

LINDA BALLOU (left) tells us about the exploits of the 19th-century British adventurer Isabella Bird, whose journeys are retraced in a new BBC series

***Trailblazers* sees Ruby Wax, Melanie Brown and Emily Atack travelling in the footsteps of Isabella Bird. What was your involvement in the series?**
I was interviewed as an expert. Isabella is a legend in Estes Park, Colorado, where she's considered to be the mother of the Rocky Mountain National Park. She wrote so glowingly of the place that it brought millions of tourists to the area. I first went there because of her book, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*. It was because of Isabella that I became a travel writer. And my 2021 novel, *Embrace of the Wild*, was inspired by her life.

What was Isabella like?
She was an adventure junkie. She found adrenaline and became alive in her body when she was in the wild. She didn't like going to civilised places when she travelled. Also, she had what she called "interest". She said, "I would be a very lonely person if it weren't for my interest", which I believe is another word for curiosity and wanting to experience the world.

She wasn't a feminist, even though I consider her to be an empowered woman and a role model. She wasn't interested in convincing anybody to be the way she was.

Her travels in 1873, in both the Sandwich Islands (the Hawaiian archipelago) and the Colorado wilderness, seem to be key to her story. Is that how you see it?
Hawaii was so transformational for this woman. She wanted to go up the flank of a volcano, and she had to ride in a Mexican saddle astride the horse to do so. This is where she learned she didn't have to suffer pain in her back, which she did when she was riding side saddle. When she was sitting with her spine aligned, she could gallop with the wind.

Jim Nugent, known as "Rocky Mountain Jim", was Bird's guide when she climbed the 4,346m Longs Peak in Estes Park. Who was he?
He was a ruffian with the soul of a poet, a teller of tales. He was an alcoholic, a trapper, he lived in a hovel. Nugent declared himself a guardian of the mountains. You couldn't get to Estes Park without going past the settlement of Muggins Gulch, where his cabin was, and he would collect a toll. Half of his face had been disfigured by a bear.

People like to imagine a romance between the two, but would it be better to see Isabella Bird as the heroine of her own story?
Yes, marriage was not important to her. She was looking to be free – spiritually, emotionally and physically free. H

Trailblazers: A Rocky Mountain Road Trip is expected to air in late November on BBC Two and iPlayer

BBC TWO

A portrait of travel writer Isabella Bird. A BBC series sees three presenters follow in her footsteps

HISTORY COOKBOOK

TASTE

Galette des rois

Enjoyed on the 12th day of Christmas, galette des rois is a French festive staple

Since the Middle Ages, French families have celebrated the festive period with a slice of galette des rois, or king cake. Served on the 12th day of Christmas (6 January) to celebrate Epiphany – when the three kings arrived to see Jesus – an extra helping is traditionally saved for the poor.

For centuries, a surprise has also been baked into the cake: a bean, representing fertility. Although traditionally finding the bean would lead to becoming king for the day, in the 14th century a different custom emerged. Whichever courtier was given the slice containing the bean had to pay for drinks for the whole court – some miserly characters apparently swallowed the bean rather than cough up for so many drinks orders.

Difficulty: 2/10
Time: 1 hour

INGREDIENTS

400g ready-made puff pastry
2 rounded tbsp apricot jam
100g softened butter
100g caster sugar
1 lightly beaten egg
100g ground almond
2 tbsp cognac or dark rum

METHOD

1. Heat your oven to 200°C, or 180°C if you're using a fan oven.
2. Divide the puff pastry in two. Roll out each half, and cut both pieces into a 25cm circle.
3. Put one pastry circle on a baking sheet and spread the jam on top, stopping about 2cm from the pastry edge.
4. Beat the butter and sugar together until they form a fluffy mixture, and then beat in the egg. Stir in the ground almonds and cognac or dark rum.
5. Spoon the mixture over the jam, spreading it evenly. Brush the edges of the pastry with water, and then place the second pastry circle on top.
6. Press the two circles' edges together to seal them. Score the top of the pastry, starting in the centre and fanning out to the edges, to make a pattern like the spokes of a wheel. Brush with beaten egg.
7. Bake for 25–30 minutes, until the pastry is crisp and golden. Serve warm or cold.

Recipe: BBC Good Food. bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/galette-des-rois

These ceremonial knives, which are believed to be Congolese, are part of a new display at Scarborough Art Gallery examining colonialism

SAMANTHA NOTT/SCARBOROUGH ART GALLERY

VISIT

Chequered past

At the turn of the 20th century, Colonel James Harrison left his home in Yorkshire to travel to the Congo, so he could hunt big game for sport. Disturbingly, in 1905 he brought six people of the Ituri Forest back with him to Britain, to be unwitting participants in a touring "human zoo".

After Harrison's death, his widow donated some of the spoils of his travels to Scarborough's museum. These diaries, letters and taxidermied animals make up the Harrison Collection – and now, the museum group is using this collection as a jumping-off point to consider how it has benefited from colonialism. The display also explores global issues such as indigenous rights, conservation and habitat loss.

From Local to Global
Scarborough Art Gallery / Until 19 Feb 2023 / *scarboroughmuseumsandgalleries.org.uk*

Welsh actors Ryan Davies and Ronnie Williams, the stars of BBC comedy show *Ryan and Ronnie*

SHUTTERSTOCK/BBC ARCHIVES

VISIT

Centenary celebrations

With 2022 marking 100 years since the BBC came into being, commemorations for the centenary have been in full swing for almost a year. Those commemorations include an exhibition at the National Museum Cardiff, which will be exploring the work of BBC Wales and looking at how the country has shaped the BBC. Visitors can immerse themselves in the past 100 years of broadcasting via a carefully curated selection of costumes, objects and archival footage.

BBC 100 in Wales
National Museum Cardiff / 10 December 2022–31 January 2023 / *museum.wales*

LISTEN

Creatives and dissidents

As the man once said: "It's Christmas!!!" The perfect time then for Slade frontman Noddy Holder to nominate someone he thinks led a great life. His choice is rock'n'roll pioneer Chuck Berry (1926–2017), a true original and the composer of 'Johnny B Goode' – but also a man who had frequent brushes with the law.

As Radio 4's long-running biographical series returns, other highlights include Ukrainian chef Olia Hercules discussing her fellow countrywoman Alla Horska (1929–70), a painter and dissident; and writer Olivia Laing, who speaks of her admiration for gardener Christopher Lloyd (1921–2006).

Chuck Berry in the 1959 film *Go, Johnny Go*. He is nominated in the latest BBC *Great Lives* series

Great Lives
BBC Radio 4 / From Tuesday 6 December

Lucy Worsley reads from *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* in a Torquay villa, on location for her new BBC series on writer Agatha Christie

WATCH

Power of the pen

One way to think about Agatha Christie (1890–1976) is as someone who hid in plain sight. While she often described herself as a housewife, it's safe to say that most homemakers don't sell between 2 billion and 4 billion copies (estimates vary wildly) of their books.

So who was the "real" woman behind the deliberately understated image she projected? Having recently written an acclaimed biography of the queen of crime, *Agatha Christie: A Very Elusive Woman*, Lucy Worsley is better placed than most to answer this question.

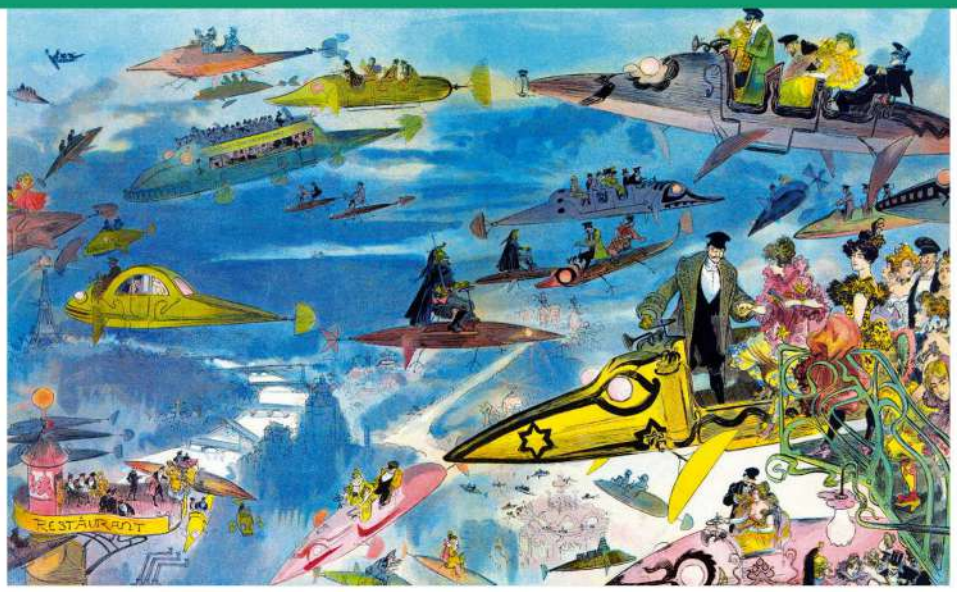
Over three episodes, Worsley profiles the creator of Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple. She shows her not as a writer of cosy crime, but as someone whose work acutely reflected 20th-century Britain's upheavals. Christie's life, remember, encompassed two global conflicts; advances in science, technology and medicine; the loss of empire and profound societal change.

In her book, Worsley sees Christie the writer almost as a kind of middlebrow modernist. It seems reasonable to suspect the series will show Christie in a similar light. H

Agatha Christie: Mystery Queen
BBC Two / Early December

PODCASTS

Every issue we highlight a recent edition of our podcast. You can find it along with more than 1,500 previous episodes at our website: **historyextra.com/podcast**



This cartoon by Albert Robida, c1882, imagines Parisians travelling home from the opera by air in the year 2000

Visions of the future

Our podcast editor **ELLIE CAWTHORNE** discusses a recent episode that reveals the Victorians to have been more forward-thinking than we might imagine

When the Victorians pictured the year 2000, what did they see? "They imagined the 20th century as an almost entirely electrical century. People would be travelling in electric cars or zooming about in new-fangled flying machines. You would pick up a phone to order your supper, and it would be electronically delivered to you". Sound familiar?

Iwan Rhys Morus joined me on our podcast this month to speak about the Victorians' visions of the future, and the staggeringly ambitious inventions they hoped would get them there. This was a time when innovation moved at a dizzying pace, each development opening up new vistas of possibility. "Even within a decade of steam locomotion being established, it was already being seen as old hat," says Morus. "Electricity was the future."

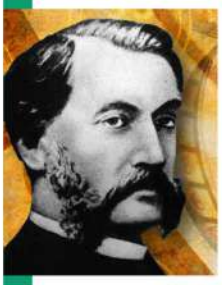
Perhaps most surprisingly, this electrical future was often imagined to be a renewable one. One 1894 novel by tycoon John Jacob Astor (set aboard a spacecraft in the year 2000) offers up a potted history of a 20th century powered by electricity generated by windmills, waterfalls and lightning. Others fantasised about harnessing solar power.

But we shouldn't fool ourselves that the Victorians were dreaming up these renewable futures because they had anything even remotely resembling our own environmental concerns. While there *were* worries about over-reliance on coal, these were not about the damage wreaked by non-renewable fuel sources. "Quite simply, they knew that coal would run out and they would need to find other ways of fuelling the empire" says Morus. "So using what we see now as 'renewable energy' simply seemed like the logical conclusion. But let's not forget that many of the issues of over-industrialisation and environmental destruction we have to deal with today are a legacy of the Victorians' entanglement of science and technology with imperial ideology. They believed that the world was there to provide them with the resources they needed to run the empire."

But is there anything we might be able to learn from these obsessive innovators when planning for our own sustainable future? "The Victorians were brilliant at transforming how things were done, inventing new ways of thinking about technology and the future. Like them, we too can think about new ways of doing what's needed to save our planet."

Listen now
You can hear this episode at *historyextra.com/victorian-visions*

THREE MORE HISTORYEXTRA PODCASTS ON **VICTORIAN INNOVATORS**



Mystery & movies

In September 1890, inventor Louis Le Prince hopped on a train to Paris and promptly vanished without a trace. What happened to him? And could his promising innovations in early motion-picture cameras have gone on to rival those of Thomas Edison? Paul Fischer joined me to unravel the mystery – from theories that Le Prince was the victim of a freak accident or mugging, to conspiracies that Edison might have bumped off his competitor.
historyextra.com/vanishing-inventor

Clean-up operation

A hospital slab in the early 19th century is not a place you would want to end up. The unsanitary conditions of the time are perhaps best summed up by the fact surgeons referred to the smell of rotting flesh as the "good old hospital stink". But, as Lindsey Fitzharris reveals, over the course of the century, hospitals underwent a revolution in sanitation, spearheaded by antiseptic pioneer Joseph Lister.
historyextra.com/victorian-medicine

Family figures

Lord Byron is hailed as one of the great artistic minds of the 19th century, but two of the central women of his life were of a more mathematical persuasion. Miranda Seymour joined me to discuss the lives and interests of his wife, Annabella Milbanke, who was nicknamed the "princess of parallelograms" by her husband, and daughter, Ada Lovelace, now hailed as a pioneering mind in early computing.
historyextra.com/byron-women

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Cult secrets

Considered to be one of Britain's most significant archaeological finds, the London Mithraeum gives a fascinating glimpse into a mystery cult on the periphery of the Roman empire. **SHUSHMA MALIK** pays a visit

Rome in the first century AD was an empire populated with many gods, and temples dedicated to Mithras provide some of the most fascinating cult sites from this period. This solar cult proved particularly popular with the Roman army, and temples (known as Mithraea) devoted to the deity sprang up where the soldiers were sent – we still have some great examples of these ancient structures on the frontiers of the empire, such as Britain.

But, as a mystery cult, our knowledge of what really went on inside these spaces is limited. With Mithraism, the ancient equivalent of the "first rule of Fight Club" was in effect – the full details of the rites died with their participants.

London's Mithraeum is located in the Bloomberg SPACE building, just across the road from Cannon Street tube station. It was originally built on the bank of (what used to be) the Walbrook river. But the temple lay forgotten for centuries and was only rediscovered in 1954, when an archaeological team uncovered a marble statue head of Mithras. The excavations were part of plans to build Bucklersbury House and in 1962 the Mithraeum ruins were moved 100 metres away to Temple court, where they were reassembled for public display.

Then, in 2010, Bloomberg took over the site of Bucklersbury House and as part of the redevelopment, the temple was returned to its first home on the Walbrook.

When you enter, make sure you spend some time with the wall of objects at the top of the stairs. They comprise a wonderful treasure trove of archaeological material uncovered during the Bloomberg excavations (2010–2014). Highlights include shoes, brooches, amulets, tiles, numerous coins and examples of the famous Bloomberg writing tablets. The tablets give us a valuable insight into the day-to-day workings of Roman Britain, from sales receipts to documents relating to debts.

> **With the cult of Mithras, the ancient equivalent of the 'first rule of Fight Club' was in effect – the details died with the participants**

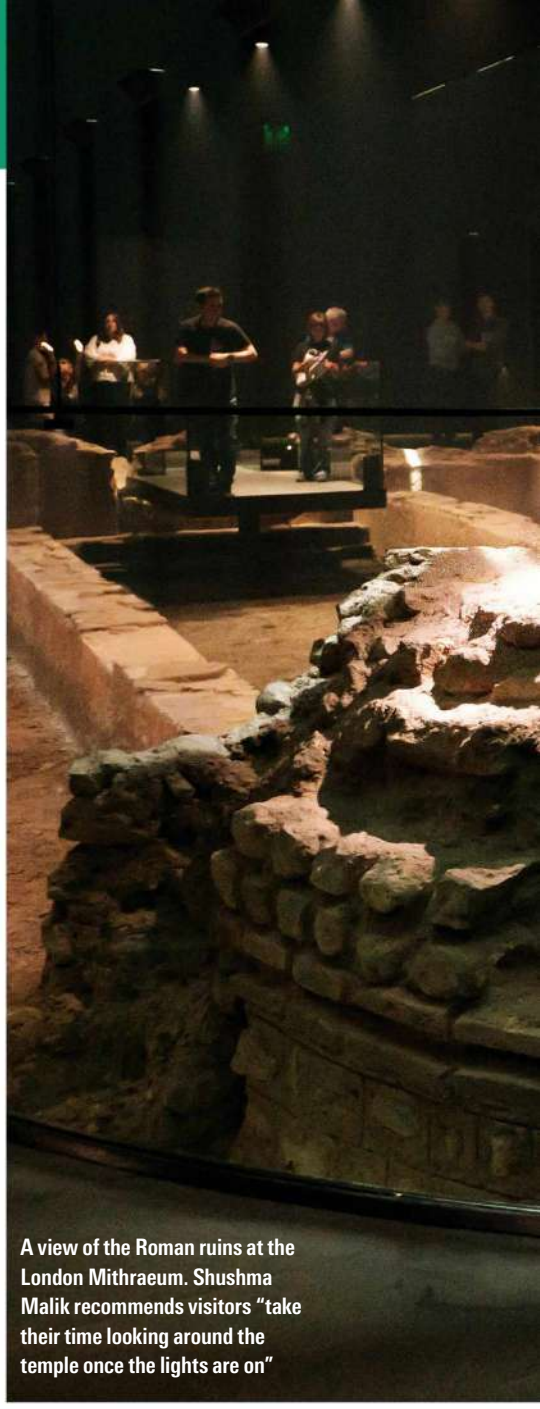
Atmosphere of antiquity

Down the stairs, before you enter the temple, you will find an information area. Interactive stations share fascinating information on what we know about Mithraism as a cult, as well as the site itself and its excavation history. There's also a board devoted to the tauroctony, the central iconographic feature in all Mithraea – the scene of Mithras slaying the bull. At the same time, playing on a track audible around the room are experts in ancient history and religion, who discuss current theories of what we can and cannot know about the cult. All of this is worth absorbing before entering the temple.

Once in the temple, Bloomberg gives its visitors a short "immersive experience" of the sounds, smells and degrees of darkness a temple-goer might have encountered. Free from explanatory boards, the temple room is about trying to recreate (as much as possible) an atmosphere of antiquity. Latin chanting is heard in the background, and the air is infused with mist. Slowly, as the lights come up, a replica of the tauroctony becomes visible (the original is in the Museum of London), along with the archaeological remains of the body of the temple. Take your time once the lights are on – many people will leave at this point, but this is your opportunity to make the most of your Mithraeum encounter, and to appreciate the mystery of this piece of Roman antiquity.

Shushma Malik is Onassis classics fellow at Newnham College at the University of Cambridge

For more information, go to **londonmithraeum.com**



A view of the Roman ruins at the London Mithraeum. Shushma Malik recommends visitors "take their time looking around the temple once the lights are on"

A sculpture representing the tauroctony, which depicts the sacrifice of a bull by the god Mithras

ALAMY

Objects uncovered during excavations at the London Mithraeum are currently part of the display

A reconstruction of a statue of Mithras's head found at the temple

Medieval marvels
Strasbourg boasts several treasures from the Middle Ages including the famed Ponts Couverts (a set of bridges and towers), part of which is shown here

DREAMSTIME.COM

Seat of power, city of beauty

Centuries at the heart of Europe has positioned Strasbourg as one of the continent's confluences for ideas and culture. The principal city of the Alsace region, it's home to a distinct blend of French and German influences, with its own dialect and shared heritage. As a result of this – and Strasbourg's prominent status as official seat of the European Parliament – the city is an ideal spot to dive into European history, culture and, of course, politics.

For many people, Strasbourg brings to mind one building: its world-famous Gothic cathedral. Completed in 1439, the cathedral of Notre-Dame was for more than two centuries the tallest building in the world, and today remains the imposing symbol of the city. Like the beautiful houses fringing the River Ill and dotting the meandering lanes of the Grande Île, Strasbourg's historic centre gives the city the air of being straight from the pages of a medieval chronicle.

The ancient core of the city, and the postcard-friendly bridges and canals connecting it with the Petite France ("Little France") area, are best explored later in the day to avoid the biggest crowds. This is also when the tiny lanes and lovely squares are at their best for wandering.

Strasbourg has big-name museums and galleries, too, including the Musée des Beaux-Arts, the Musée d'Art moderne et contemporain (MAMCS) and, housed in a group of beautiful medieval houses, the sculpture-rich Musée de l'Œuvre Notre-Dame. For something more unusual look no further than the fascinating Château Vodou, the world's largest collection of items devoted to the exploration of this much-misunderstood religion. H

IF YOU LIKE THIS...

- **Basel, Switzerland** is a multicultural riverside city with plenty of great art to explore once you've toured its well-preserved heart.

- The often overlooked **Lincoln, England** also once held the status as the home of the world's tallest building on completion of its cathedral.

By **Tom Hall**, travel writer and co-author of *Lonely Planet's Guide to Train Travel in Europe* (2022)

CHRISTMAS QUIZ 2022

11

'Tis the season to test your knowledge of all things historical with our fiendish festive quiz

COMPILED BY **JUSTIN AND STEPHANIE POLLARD**

Nativity scenes

1. Which nativity character has been portrayed in film by Cab Calloway, Christopher Walken and Tilda Swinton?
2. In memory of whom do Sicilians carry dried fava beans, to commemorate how he saved the island from famine in the medieval period?
3. What punishment did Pope Julius II order for the hoaxers who tricked a fellow Swiss monk into believing he'd seen an apparition of the Virgin Mary?
4. Who had a first wife called Doris and died of a painful putrefying disease in Jericho?
5. How many Magi visited the newborn Jesus, according to the New Testament?
6. Which group of worshippers came quickly to Bethlehem because, as the Venerable Bede said, "the presence of Christ must not be sought with sluggishness"?
7. In West Country folklore, what are the animals in the fields said to do at midnight on 5 January?
8. What was stolen in October 1847 by Greek monks from the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem?

5

19

Deep and crisp and even

9. In the 16th and 17th centuries, large parts of the Thames estuary were flooded in winter to provide what?
10. Which sport's first official match was described thus: "Shins and heads were battered, benches smashed and the lady spectators fled in confusion"?
11. The introduction of the ice-cream cone was intended to reduce the incidence of which disease?
12. Which icy invention earned inventor Lloyd Groff Copeman nearly £9m in today's money?
13. During the first non-stop crossing of the Atlantic, Arthur Brown was reported to have removed ice from the wings of the plane:
a. By climbing out and chipping it off
b. Using a hair dryer
c. By looping the loop

Present indicative

14. What surprise 1,500-ton present did Mr Chubb buy his wife in 1915?
15. Michael Bond bought the original Paddington Bear from a shop near Paddington railway station on Christmas Eve 1956. Who did he buy it for?
16. The capture of Jerusalem in 1917 was described by David Lloyd George as a Christmas present for whom?
17. For Christmas 1921, Christopher Robin Milne received what?
18. In 1920 perfumier Ernest Beaux gave Coco Chanel 10 numbered bottles of scent. Which one did she choose as the Christmas present for her best clients?
19. What was unusual about the harp that Salvador Dalí sent Harpo Marx for Christmas in 1936?
20. Friedrich Nietzsche gave Cosima Wagner prefaces to five of his books as a Christmas present. What was unusual about them?
a. They were in a made-up language
b. He never wrote the books they prefaced
c. They were blank sheets of paper

21. Which of these was not a Christmas present bought by Priscilla Presley for Elvis?
a. Bongo drums
b. A wooden cigar box that played the song 'Surrender' when opened
c. A golden toilet

15

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Are you a history brain-box?
Test your historical knowledge
at our quiz hub: *historyextra.com/quiz*

Picture round: Christmas in quotes

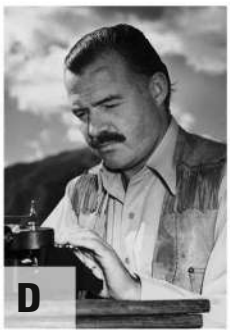
Match the famous festive quotes with their speakers' portraits

22. "I know nobody likes me. Why do we have to have a holiday season to emphasise it?"
23. "Unless we make Christmas an occasion to share our blessings, all the snow in Alaska won't make it 'white'."
24. "For it is in giving that we receive."
25. "If my Valentine you won't be, I'll hang myself on your Christmas tree."
26. "I stopped believing in Santa Claus when I was six. Mother took me to see him in a department store, and he asked for my autograph."
27. "Happy, happy Christmas, that can win us back to the delusions of our childhood days; that can recall to the old man the pleasures of his youth; that can transport the sailor and traveller, thousands of miles away, back to his own fireside and his quiet home!"

A

B

C


D

E

F

Board stupid

28. Which game was originally called Pretzel and was referred to as "sex in a box", after Eva Gabor and Johnny Carsson played it on US television in 1966?
29. Which family favourite has Professor Pimpel, Rosa Roodhart and Mw. Blaauw van Draet in its Dutch version?
30. Which game of luck originated in ancient India as a morality lesson?
31. Which hit electronic memory game, launched in 1978, was based on Atari's unpopular 'Touch Me' arcade game?
32. Which game gained a Latin name when the inventor failed to get the name "Hobby" trademarked?
33. Which of these was never a monopoly token?
a. A getaway car
b. A sack of money
c. A doll's house

History headlines 2022

34. In July this year, Elizabeth Johnson Jr became the last person to be cleared of what?
a. Being a Salem witch
b. Conspiring to assassinate President Abraham Lincoln
c. Stealing the Ghent Altarpiece

35. What Second World War artefacts were revealed by falling water levels in the Danube this August?
a. Secret bunkers
b. German warships
c. Nazi gold

36. What stolen item, missing for more than two decades, was returned to Cambridge University Library this March with an anonymous note reading "Happy Easter"?
a. Darwin's notebooks
b. An Enigma machine
c. Lord Byron's college bill

37. The largest cache of Roman coins ever discovered in northern Spain was uncovered this year by:
a. Archaeologists
b. Water diviners
c. Badgers

38. Which team member joined the Pompeii inspection team this spring?
a. Dante, the dog
b. Hugo, the tortoise
c. Spot, the robot

39. Ernest Shackleton's ship *Endurance* was discovered in March. How many years is it since the explorer's death?
a. 80
b. 100
c. 130

39

40. The University of Michigan's Galileo manuscript containing the "first observational data that showed objects orbiting a body other than Earth" was removed from display in May, because it was:
a. Fake
b. Upside down
c. Singeing under the lights

2023 anniversaries

41.What 13-letter town sign first appeared in public 100 years ago?
42. Which London landmark was constructed 100 years ago on the site of Watkin's Folly, an unfinished attempt to build an iron tower taller than the Eiffel Tower?
43. One hundred years ago, on 9 November, who jumped on a chair, fired a pistol into the ceiling and shouted "The national revolution has broken out"?
44. On 15 June, 1,100 years ago, which Carolingian king, also known rather rudely as *stultus* (fatuous), *hebes* (stupid), *insipiens* (foolish), *parvus* (small) and *minor* (inferior) lost the battle of Soissons?
45. Which tower, which is 55.86 metres on one side and 56.67 metres on the other, was begun 850 years ago? H

Quiz answers

Nativity scenes
1. The Archangel Gabriel **2.** St Joseph **3.** Burning at the stake **4.** Herod the Great **5.** The number is never given (although they brought three gifts) **6.** The Shepherds **7.** Kneel, in celebration of the old (Julian) Christmas **8.** The silver star marking the spot where Christ was born – often given as one of the casus belli for the Crimean War **9.** Ice Hockey – on 3 March 1875 at the Victoria Skating rink in Montreal **11.** Cholera – transmitted by people sharing poorly washed glass "penny licks" **12.** The rubber ice-cube tray **13. a.** By climbing out and chipping it off
Present indicative
14. Stonehenge **15.** His wife **16.** The British people **17.** Eeyore **18.** No.5 **19.** It had barbed wire strings and spoons for tuning knobs. Harpo sent Dali a photograph of himself playing the harp with bandaged fingers **20. b.** He never wrote the books they were prefaces to **21. c.** A golden toilet
Picture round: Christmas in quotes
22. C – Charlie Brown **23.** F – Bing Crosby **24.** B – Francis of Assisi **25.** D – Ernest Hemingway **26.** E – Shirley Temple **27.** A – Charles Dickens
Board stupid
28. Twister **29.** Cluedo **30.** Snakes and Ladders **31.** Simon **32.** Subbuteo **33. c.** A doll's house
History headlines 2022
34. a. Being a Salem witch **35. b.** German warships **36. a.** Darwin's notebooks **37. c.** Badgers **38. c.** Spot, the robot **39. b.** 100
2023 anniversaries
40. a. Fake **41.** Hollywoodland (later shortened to "Hollywood") **42.** Wembley Stadium **43.** Adolf Hitler at the failed Beer Hall Putsch **44.** Charles the Simple **45.** The Leaning Tower of Pisa

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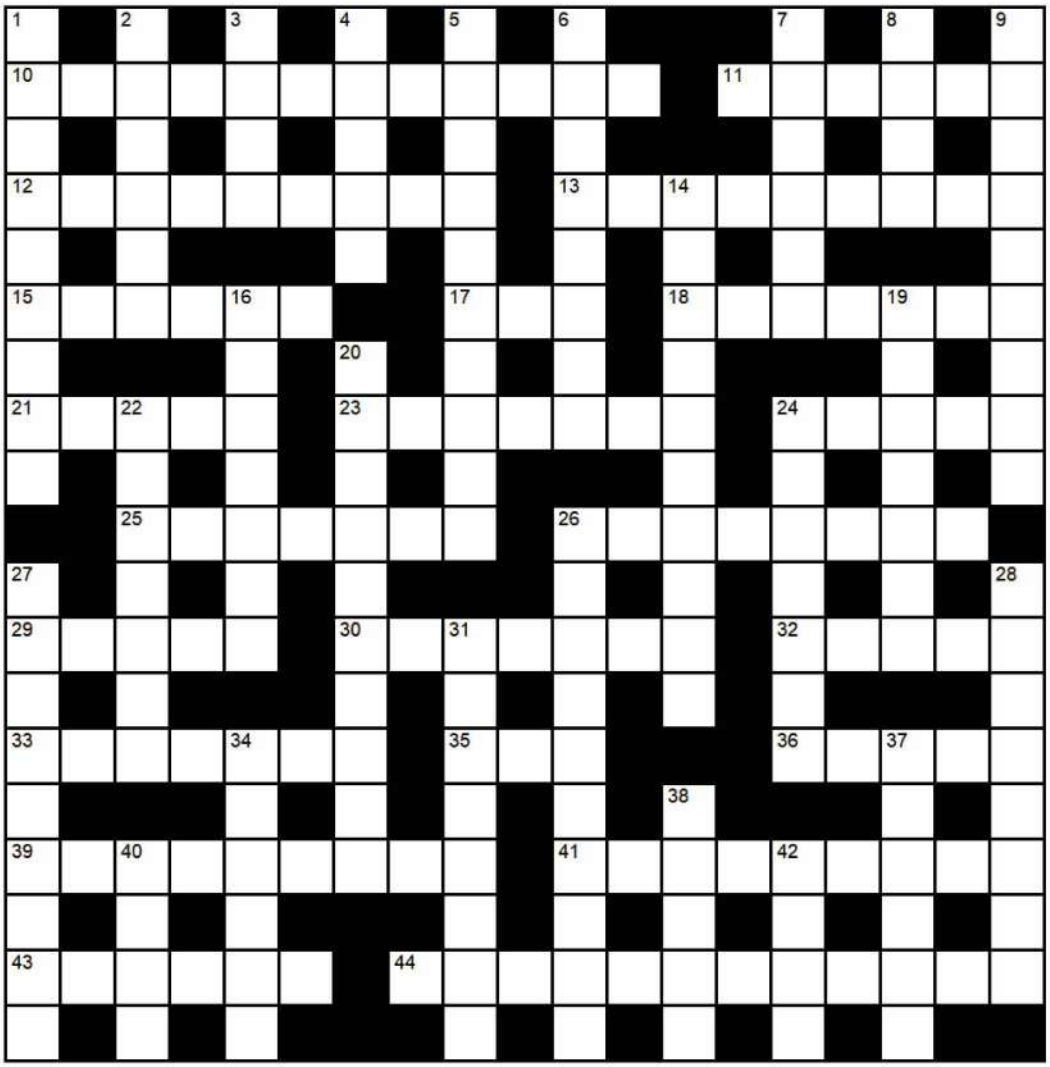
PRIZE CROSSWORD

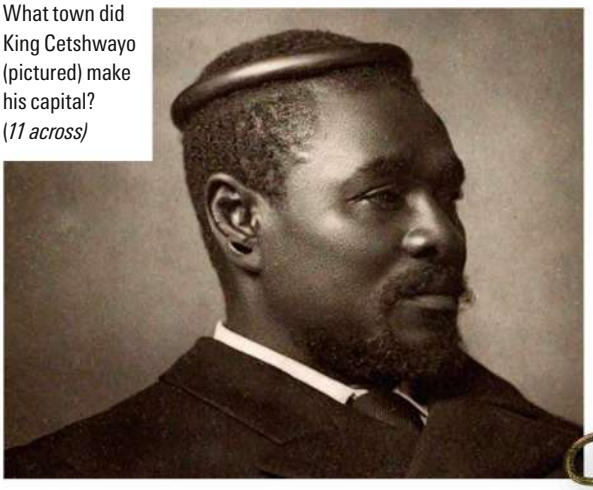


Across

10 She remains a notorious character in popular culture, despite being acquitted of the 1892 murder of her stepmother and father in Massachusetts (6,6)
11 British name of the South African town, which Cetshwayo, king of the Zulu, made his new capital in 1873 (6)
12 Popular name for an illicit liquor bar during the Prohibition era (9)
13 He is credited with bringing Christianity to Ireland around the fifth century (2,7)
15 Legendary warrior-poet of Irish literature, thought to be mostly an 18th-century invention (6)
17 In Mesopotamian religion, the god of the moon (also known as Nanna) (3)
18 Stephen ____, whose appointment as archbishop of Canterbury played a big part in the Magna Carta crisis (7)
21 Abbreviation of the sonar system developed by America in the mid-20th century to track Soviet submarines (5)
23 Oscar Wilde was incarcerated in this town's gaol from 1895–97 (7)
24 Now an African Democratic Republic, it was once seen by Leopold II of Belgium as his private property (5)
25 Janusz ____, the Jewish head of a Warsaw orphanage, who was transported with the children and staff to Treblinka in 1942 (7)
26 One such as John Wilkes Booth (1865) or Gavrilo Princip (1914) (8)
29 One of the legendary brothers who led the first Anglo-Saxon settlers to arrive in Britain (5)
30 First name of probably Britain's most famous naval commander (7)
32 A member of the Germanic tribe who settled in eastern England in the fifth century (5)

What's the name of this figure, who is said to have brought Christianity to Ireland? *(13 across)*

What town did King Cetshwayo (pictured) make his capital? *(11 across)*



33 A role of Lieutenant Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg and others in 1944 (7)
35 Protestant paramilitary organisation founded in Northern Ireland in the 1960s (3)
36 It became, controversially, an autonomous region of China in 1965 (5)
39 Name given to the members of the body formed in 1310 to limit Edward II's power (9)
41 The longest-serving Israeli PM since that country's independence (9)
43 Major ninth-century BC Hebrew prophet who led the opposition to worship of the god Baal (6)
44 Building used by members of the fraternal organisation evolving from certain medieval guilds (7,5)

Down

1 Charity dwelling founded for the poor, dating from medieval times (9)
2 People of central/southern Mexico, whose empire was ended after Hernán Cortés's army arrived in 1519 (6)

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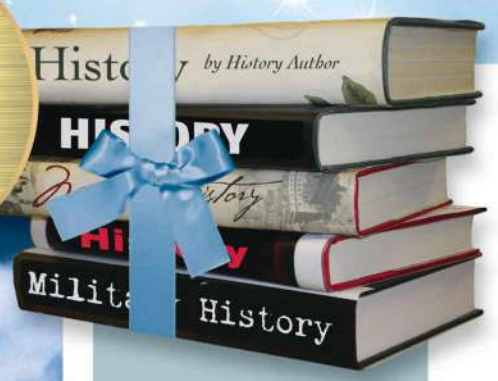

Climbers from the 1953 British Mount Everest Expedition. Who were the two people from the expedition who made history by becoming the first to reach Everest's summit? *(19 down)*

3 Luxury commodity that gave its name to the "____ Road" used by traders between China and the west (4)
4 The type of vessel that sank RMS *Lusitania*, in controversial circumstances, in 1915 (1–4)
5 Paris-born British travel writer who worked for the British Ministry of Information during the Second World War (5,5)
6 City that hosted the 1975 "Accords" on "Security and Co-operation in Europe" (8)
7 Last name of the highly popular 20th-century writer of children's stories, sometimes criticised for her stereotyped characters (6)
8 Its original full name, in 1824, was the Royal National Institution for the Preservation of Lives and Property from Shipwreck (4)
9 Little-known during her 19th-century lifetime, her work is now regarded as among the finest in American poetry (9)
14 Theoretical property of combustible substances, discredited by Lavoisier in the late 18th century (10)
16 A major empire of Mesopotamia, whose largest city was Nineveh (7)
19 ____Norgay, one of the first two people known to have reached the summit of Everest (7)
20 The Lakota chief hunted down after helping Sitting Bull annihilate Custer's troops in 1876 (5,5)
22 Indonesia's first president, who established an autocratic system called "Guided Democracy" (7)
24 Mary ____, the American painter who exhibited with the Impressionists in the late 19th century (7)
26 Legislation, taking effect in 1801, that created the UK (3,2,5)
27 Charles I's revival of this tax added to the discontent that led to the Civil War (4,5)
28 ____Jekyll, 19th/20th-century garden designer who collaborated with Edward Lutyens (8)
31 Jean-Jacques ____, 18th-century French philosopher whose theories inspired the leaders of the French Revolution (8)
34 In 1949, this island became the base of the nationalist government of China after the communist takeover of the mainland (6)
37 West German chancellor who had earlier been the mayor of West Berlin (1957–66) (6)
38 A follower of the school of philosophy founded by Zeno of Citium (5)
40 The legislative body formed when 73 Sinn Féin MPs broke away from Westminster in 1919 (4)
42 The battle of the ____, which, in 1798, was a great victory for Horatio Nelson (4)

Who is this travel writer? *(5 down)*

Compiled by **Eddie James**

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Solution to our November 2022 crossword

Across: 1 Relic 4 Navarino 10 Frost fair 11 Indus 12 Liddell 13/30 Pelican Portrait 14 Swazi 16 Via Appia 18 Hereward 21 Omaha 24 Erasmus 26 Glencoe 28 Sudan 29 Gaugamela 31 Petard
Down: 1 Raffles 2 Lloyd 3 Catherine 5 Agrippa 6 Ariel 7 Indochina 8 Orsini 9 Bar Lev 15 Alexander 17 Promenade 19 Assegai 20 Dugout 22 Abelard 23 Jessop 25 Minor 27 Cheka

Five winners of *Kings and Queens*
C Greenwood, Lancashire; P Simkins, Staffordshire; C Woodhall, Surrey; B Cooper, Hertfordshire; N Porter, Oxfordshire

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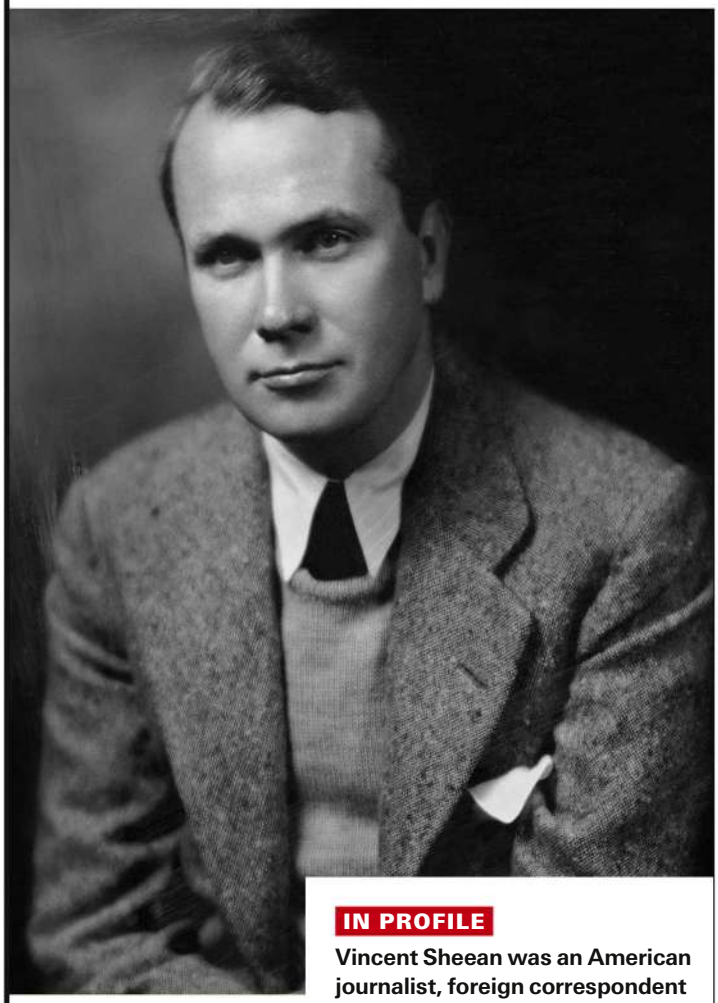
MY HISTORY HERO

BBC foreign correspondent ***Jeremy Bowen*** *chooses*

Vincent Sheean

1899–1975

Jeremy Bowen is international editor for BBC News. His latest book, *The Making of the Modern Middle East,* is out now (Picador)



The foreign correspondent Vincent Sheean worked during a golden age of journalism. People like him were "poking their noses into places where sometimes they weren't wanted", says Jeremy Bowen

IN PROFILE

Vincent Sheean was an American journalist, foreign correspondent and author. He reported from Palestine in the 1920s and also covered the Spanish Civil War and the Blitz. His 1935 memoir, *Personal History,* helped inspire Alfred Hitchcock's 1940 Hollywood drama, *Foreign Correspondent*.

When did you first hear about Sheean? Several years ago, when I came across his memoir in a second-hand bookshop. It's a rather dated work in some respects but it's still an interesting period piece, and lifts the lid on what was quite a heroic period in terms of foreign correspondents reporting from the world's trouble spots.

What kind of man was he? He was clearly an adventurous sort of guy and spent a lot of time travelling the world. He witnessed the Spanish Civil War, and also wrote an account of being in England during the Battle of Britain called, slightly melodramatically, *Between the Thunder and the Sun*.

What made Sheean a hero? I'm not really one for hero worship – we all have feet of clay – but I can't help but admire Sheean and his peers in that golden age of journalism: such as Gareth Jones, the Welshman who first reported on the Holodomor [Great Famine] in Ukraine, and the BBC's Stanley Maxted who was given a seat on a glider plane and reported from the battle of Arnhem. Foreign and war reporting was in its infancy but people like them were poking their noses into places where sometimes they weren't wanted. It's a bit of a cliché, but they were writing the first draft of history.

What was Sheean's finest hour? I was very taken by his comments about Jerusalem because it's a city I know well. He wrote first hand about events that happened a century ago, such as the massacre of religious Jews in Hebron by Arabs in the 1920s, which people still talk about today. In the end, rather like me, he was enchanted by the city on one level, but found the level of hatred rather overwhelming. His comments about the Balfour Declaration, which he condemned for its contradictions, were perceptive.

Is there anything that you don't particularly admire about him? Not really, although after reading this someone will no doubt unearth some appalling things he said which these days would get him cancelled.

Can you see any parallels between Sheean's life and your own? We're both journalists and foreign correspondents, although it is very different now to what it was like in his day. Back then, foreign correspondents had to take boats to get around, and once you'd reached somewhere you'd often be there for months.

What would you ask him if you could meet him? I'd ask him about his everyday life. And I'd love to have had a drink with him at Fink's, a legendary Jerusalem watering hole dating back to the 1930s, which has sadly now gone.

Jeremy Bowen was talking to York Membery

> "Foreign correspondents had to take boats to get around, and once you'd reached somewhere you'd often be there for months"

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